



Written by [William P. Hoar](#) on November 5, 2021

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Correction, Please!

Gas Pains and Other Fossil-fuel Follies



Take the pain: Many Americans are complaining of the “pain at the pump” in the form of higher gas prices. This is a direct consequence of the Biden administration’s energy policy, and many on the left are saying, in effect, “deal with it.” (Photo credit: *Fahroni/iStock/Getty Images Plus*)

Item: “Americans are feeling pain at the pump,” noted *CNN Business* on October 8. Yet, said the left-wing news outlet — seeking to screen the Biden administration from blame — “there’s little the White House can do to shield them from it.”

The “highest oil and gasoline prices since 2014 are casting a shadow over the economic recovery from the Covid recession,” continued the report. “Energy sticker shock threatens to intensify the nation’s biggest inflation scare in more than a dozen years.”

Item: “The world is entering — indeed, much of it has already entered — a massive energy crunch,” according to the *Washington Post*’s Catherine Rampell in the October 12 print edition of the leftist paper. “Coal, natural gas, oil and gasoline prices have all spiked.... If this winter is severe, prices could well rise much further.”

The *United States*, she writes (in a column entitled “Energy prices shouldn’t stop our transition to cleaner fuels”), “appears on the verge of a huge investment in climate, through Democrats’ budget legislation.” Meanwhile, the White House “recently committed to looking ‘at whatever means we have to lower gas prices.’”

Though it is “reasonable,” says the columnist, “to try to shield constituents from short-term price spikes — particularly if those people might otherwise, you know, freeze to death — that does not mean that global leaders must also abandon long-term efforts to reduce carbon emissions.”

Item: President Biden said on October 21, during a staged “town hall,” that he does not anticipate that gas prices will go down until 2022. (Here are his actual words from the White House press office: “My guess is you’ll start to see gas prices come down as we get by — going into the winter — I mean, excuse me, into next year, in 2022. I don’t see anything that’s going to happen in the meantime that’s going to significantly reduce gas prices.”)



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Biden told CNN's Anderson Cooper that gas prices depend a "little bit on Saudi Arabia and a few other things that are in the offing." He didn't sound confident: "So there's — there — but I don't — I must tell you, I don't have a near-term answer." The takeaway: "But it's going to be hard. It's going to be hard."

Correction: When you are stuck in a hole, as the old adage has it, the first thing to do is to stop digging.

However, the Biden team is still digging — and it's not for proven, effective, vital domestic energy. It is undoubtedly going to be hard. That's because Joe Biden *intended* to put U.S. energy in the ditch. He vowed in his campaign to kill fossil fuels, and began his assaults as soon as he got into the White House — all in the name of fighting climate change.

Here's what Biden inherited: Under Donald Trump, the United States had effectively become energy independent. Indeed, the nation was a net exporter of petroleum products. Between November 2016 and March 2020, U.S. domestic oil production rose 44 percent, even as imports were falling 33 percent. Because of that, as noted by Issues and Insights, the United States "became a net oil exporter *for the first time since at least 1949*. By December 2020, the U.S. was exporting an average of 1.2 million barrels of crude oil and petroleum products *every day*." (Emphasis in original.)

Biden threw that immense economic machine into sudden reverse. As summarized by the *Washington Times*: On his first day in office, Biden

canceled the Keystone XL pipeline, killing 11,000 U.S. jobs and limiting supply. He's placed a moratorium on new oil and gas leases on federal lands, threatening another 268,000 jobs and limiting U.S. production. The Biden administration has suspended oil and gas leases in Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. It is increasing the number of endangered-species protections to limit oil production on private land. Mr. Biden's so-called "Build Back Better" plan will unleash a plethora of new taxes and regulations on the industry if passed by Congress.

Although the Biden administration hasn't fully banned fracking, Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm suggested it's still a possibility and has even toyed with the idea of banning U.S. oil exports. These two moves would hasten the Biden administration's transition to a green economy but would also be a kill shot to many domestic producers.

This major shift, as even the *New York Times* acknowledges, could "make America more dependent on the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries [OPEC], authoritarian leaders and politically unstable countries."

Markets matter. Shale producers in this country, who have been enjoying a boom in crude output for a decade, are not eager to drill for more oil in a marketplace made unfriendly by Biden and his progressive allies. As Reuters has reported: "It can take six months to drill and complete a new well and bring the oil and gas to market. Any call by the White House for an increase in U.S. production is likely to fall on deaf ears." Thus, when the Biden administration belatedly went, hat in hand, to OPEC and the villainous domestic oil industry to discuss elevated prices, their pleas met an unreceptive audience.

Anne Bradbury, CEO at the American Exploration and Production Council, explained, "By pursuing policies that restrict supply and make it harder to produce oil and natural gas here in America,



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Americans will have to pay more for their energy.”

It still seems that there is a way to get out of the hole. Bradbury put it this way in a statement in mid-October:

To ensure we have a stable and affordable supply of energy here in the United States, the Biden Administration should support the domestic production of oil and natural gas, ensure the continued production on federal land, work with the industry on sensible and smart methane regulations, and stop calling for higher taxes on the American oil and gas industry.

Stopping pipelines, slowing permitting, raising taxes, and increasing regulatory burdens will only drive-up costs, and hurt American jobs.



Ending independence: Biden’s cancellation of the Keystone XL pipeline and his harsh stance on domestic energy production have all but ended America’s energy independence enjoyed during the Trump years. *(Photo credit: VladKol/iStock/Getty Images Plus)*

The Biden administration is counterproductive, literally. Accordingly, here’s the sad word from the Energy Information Administration: Americans will experience soaring energy prices this winter — more expensive than any season since 2007. Those using (for example) natural gas to heat homes (nearly half of the households in the country) can expect to pay 30-percent more than last year; the households that primarily use heating oil will pay (on average) 43-percent more than in the winter of 2020; and propane households will have to shell out 54-percent more than last winter.

Republican members of the House Energy and Commerce Committee recently wrote to Energy Secretary Granholm demanding to know what is planned to meet the challenges of a cold winter, unaffordable energy prices, and disruptions of supply. In their October 14 letter, they reminded the secretary that (over the last year and a half) “retail gasoline prices have increased 80 percent, natural gas prices have increased 274 percent, and propane prices have increased 552 percent.”

Fingers might well be pointed at some real villains, notably the greens and preposterous progressives so instrumental in putting Biden in the Oval Office. Indeed, their anti-energy actions have helped create the current environment: “U.S. power plants,” according to Bloomberg, “are on track to burn 23% more coal this year, the first increase since 2013.” Coal is expected to supply about 24 percent of the nation’s



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electricity this year.

Energy sources that are better than coal, in terms of emissions, have been victimized by greenie collectivists. It is “no secret,” writes Clarice Feldman for *American Thinker*, “that the cleanest most reliable fuel — nuclear — was murdered by the greens. Then natural gas, the second cleanest, became their target, so now many places are desperate for coal, the dirtiest option.”

Noah Rothman put it bluntly in a recent *Commentary* piece (“Of Course, We Should Blame the Greens for the Energy Crunch”), pointing out that those in the “activist class” are so dead-set against pipelines that they are even opposed

to the idea of transit networks that would store greenhouse gases in underground facilities. The technological marvels that produced the fracking revolution — the developers of which quickly became the world’s “swing” energy producers that could stabilize the global market in the event of a supply shock — have been handcuffed. No wonder speculative long-term investors in the development of energy sources are spooked.

The *intended consequence* of these policies was to create artificial energy scarcity and incentivize alternative fuel producers to enter the marketplace. “If you restrict the supply (of oil and gas), you alter the market and you create a better environment for more sustainable fuels,” New York University professor Max Sarinsky told the Associated Press. This was all part of the plan, to the extent there was a plan. [Emphasis in original.]

What is the actual goal of the planners? Some might say it’s to save the planet. That is largely false. After all, even if the provisions of the climate agreement signed by Barack Obama were sustained (not likely) through the year 2100, that “would reduce global temperatures by a minuscule 0.06 degree Fahrenheit,” a point made by, among others, Bjørn Lomborg, president of the Copenhagen Consensus.



Bundle up: This winter will likely see skyrocketing heating costs due to rising energy prices. Some low-income Americans might find it difficult to keep warm. Thanks, Biden! (*Photo credit: LumiNola/E+/GettyImagesPlus*)

Lomborg, a visiting fellow at the Hoover Institution, also highlights the huge expense to reduce emissions — pointing to a *Nature* study that finds that the targeted 95-percent carbon reduction by



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2050 would cost (annually) a monstrous 11.9 percent of the U.S. gross domestic product. (That's more than the 11.6 percent of GDP in total spending on Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid in 2019.)

Control is key. That is the message inherent in the column above by the *Washington Post* writer. Whether the columnist knows it, she is echoing Swedish Finance Minister Magdalena Andersson, who heads the International Monetary Fund's steering committee. This is their operative point: Don't use high energy prices as an excuse to slow the planned transition to "clean" energy to fight the planet's climate change.

Meanwhile, Biden is pushing a "government-wide" putatively green campaign (including actions by the Treasury, Labor, and Housing and Urban Development departments, among others). What happens if the bureaucrats and the planet's would-be bosses get their way? Rupert Darwall, a senior fellow of the RealClear Foundation and author of *Green Tyranny*, provides a clue in the *Spectator* (U.K.):

In economic terms, aggressive decarbonization is the closest democracies will come to the forced collectivization of the communist bloc. It requires the deployment of coercive state power on a scale and intrusiveness exceeded only by emergency COVID lockdowns and mandates, but lasting for decades.

More simply: Energy is the means; *power* is the end.



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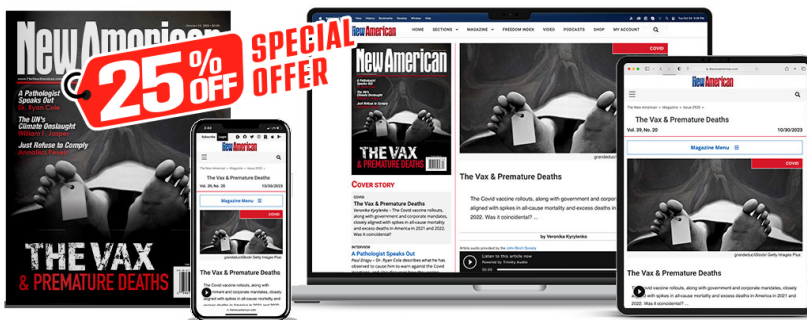
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