



Written by [Rebecca Terrell](#) on March 5, 2021

Published in the March 22, 2021 issue of [the New American](#) magazine. Vol. 37, No. 06

Lethal Green Leftists Freeze Texas

As Texas recovers from February's devastating winter storms, families mourn the loss of loved ones who perished in the frigid temperatures. The mother of an 11-year-old boy found him dead in their mobile home in Conroe after they lost power and temperatures plunged into single digits. Carbon monoxide poisoning claimed the lives of others, such as an eight-year-old Houston girl and her mother; their family had started the car in the garage to keep warm in the bitter cold. The Texas Department of State Health Services is working to determine a final mortality count, but by February's end, media sources reported at least two dozen deaths due to the historic freeze.



CatLane / iStock / Getty Images Plus
CatLane / iStock / Getty Images Plus

Just days before these tragedies, anticipating life-threatening winter conditions, Texas Governor Greg Abbott declared a state of disaster in all 254 Texas counties. The power grid supervisor, the Electric Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT), had petitioned the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) to temporarily waive onerous regulatory quotas so it could ramp up production to weather the storm.

The Biden administration refused.

Instead, his DOE issued Order No. 202-21-1 in which, though acknowledging the "imminent threat of widespread ... loss of life," it answered ERCOT's plea for permission to generate additional energy by callously disregarding that life in favor of its run-of-the-mill regulations. Freeze or no freeze, far be it from DOE to let one additional molecule of carbon dioxide escape from a power station!

"Because the additional generation may result in a conflict with environmental standards and requirements, I am authorizing only the necessary additional generation," wrote acting DOE secretary David Huizenga, who then proceeded to put conditions on what he determined necessary. In characteristic left-wing fashion, he shackled only dependable energy sources: coal, oil, and natural gas. Instead, DOE ordered ERCOT to purchase energy from outside the state, despite the fact that many of Texas' neighbors were dealing with the same ferocious winter storm, which the National Weather Service said stretched across 25 states, from southern Texas to northern Maine.

Huizenga also had the gall to insist that ERCOT "exhaust all" backup sources such as generators, solar panels (during a winter storm?!), battery power (to keep the heat on?!), etc., before it would be allowed to resort to the eco-banes of coal, oil, and natural gas. If the latter had to be revved up, the plants would still be taxed at current rates for their excess emissions. Moreover, DOE specified that any such power generated in excess of federal emissions limits had to "be offered at a price no lower than \$1,500/MWh."



Written by [Rebecca Terrell](#) on March 5, 2021

Published in the March 22, 2021 issue of [the New American](#) magazine. Vol. 37, No. 06

By comparison, ERCOT records a cost of \$18.20 per megawatt-hour just one year prior, in February 2020. But DOE's minimum bid pales in comparison to the \$9,000 cap set days later by ERCOT's boss, the Public Utilities Commission of Texas (PUC), due to record-setting demand and unprecedented scarcity of supply. So, while many Texans suffered and even died without power in the bitter cold, the lucky ones who did not lose power are now receiving life-altering utility bills. The *New York Times* interviewed Scott Willoughby, a "63-year-old Army veteran who lives on Social Security in a Dallas suburb," who had to empty his savings account to pay his \$16,752 electric bill. Public outcry from such skyrocketing prices has prompted Governor Abbott to appeal to the state legislature to "protect Texans from spikes in their energy bills." Thus, socialism begets more socialism.

On the Grid

The *New York Times* went on to blame steep prices and unpreparedness on "the state's uniquely unregulated energy market" that runs on "an entirely market-driven system." In an Orwellian contradiction, it then described how the state utility commission "raised the price cap" to \$9,000 per megawatt-hour during the crisis. One wonders what they think "unregulated" and "market-driven" mean, but obviously, the *Times* is oblivious to DOE's 48-year dictatorial reign.

Equally unaware, and in an embarrassing showcase of her ignorance of the basics of power generation, U.S. Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-N.Y.) tweeted the following outlandish claim in the midst of the catastrophe: "The infrastructure failures in Texas are quite literally what happens when you *don't* pursue a Green New Deal."

Not everyone agrees. "Just like every leftist idea, it's completely the opposite of the truth." So says consulting engineer Ed Hiserodt, energy correspondent for The New American and author of the myth-dispelling book *Underexposed: What if Radiation Is Actually Good for You?*



AP Images

Hiserodt describes what actually caused the Lone Star State's deep freeze debacle. "The system in Texas is inherently unstable because so much of it relies on wind-generated electricity," he explains. The U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) reported last October that 23 percent of Texans' energy comes from wind turbines, a fact that places the state as a world leader in so-called renewable energy and has earned accolades from the likes of CNN and the World Economic Forum.



Written by [Rebecca Terrell](#) on March 5, 2021

Published in the March 22, 2021 issue of [the New American](#) magazine. Vol. 37, No. 06

Not surprisingly, half of those west-Texas turbines froze during February's storm. Turns out that when an ice storm hits, wind isn't quite so renewable as climate alarmists claim. So why couldn't coal, oil, and natural gas simply fill in the gaps?

"It's not as simple as flipping a switch," Hiserodt explains. "Leftists like AOC, who think we can just snap our fingers and generate electricity, are insane." Understanding why this is true requires knowledge of how an electrical grid works. The fundamental concept to grasp is this: Energy must be used as it is generated and generated as it is used. That is why organizations such as ERCOT are known in the industry as "frequency chasers." They keep the grid stable by continually monitoring supply and demand. In more technical terms, they keep frequency and voltage steady to prevent surges and blackouts.

"Wind is so variable, you just can't rely on it to maintain baseload [i.e., fundamental electricity needs], let alone demand fluctuations above that," says Hiserodt, "which is why the frequency chasers complain whenever wind makes up more than 10 percent of a grid's power supply." The situation is then intrinsically unstable, unlike a grid based on coal, where "all you have to do is turn the boiler up or down to keep the frequency and voltages stable."

So again, why couldn't they just turn the boilers up in February? "It's because of government mandates," explains Hiserodt. "Wind turbines get priority. You have to use the windmills before the other power plants can be exploited." Adding fuel to this unstable fire, "wind is so overly-subsidized with production tax credits, renewable energy certificates, and other government subsidies, coal-fired plants — along with natural gas, oil, and nuclear — can't compete. These plants have to back off out of their efficiency range, or they will have to *pay* for the unused power they produce. If the wind stops, it takes time — and a lot of energy — to bring the reliable producers back online."

"It's gotten so bad in some places that reliable producers ironically need government subsidies just to stay afloat," Hiserodt points out. "There definitely isn't money or incentive to build new plants or even maintain current facilities." Yet another example of socialism begetting more socialism.

Hence the failure of Texas' natural gas pipeline, which was not properly winterized — a dire situation since natural gas provides half the state's energy needs. Freeze-offs at wellheads and gathering lines crippled 45 percent of production during the crisis, according to OilPrice.com. Abbott is blaming ERCOT for mismanagement and has ordered an investigation of the agency. But is ERCOT to blame?

Climatologist and former frequency chaser Dr. Judith Curry says not. "Texas has stacked the deck to make wind and solar more competitive than they could be in a system that better recognizes the value of dependable resources," she writes on her blog Climate Etc. "Today's wind and solar cannot achieve high penetration levels in a fair competition." She explains that Texas' troubles are magnified by the fact that its inequitable system discourages dependable resources from being ready to "back up with firm energy supplies."

"While policy makers could listen to experts" who have sufficient technical knowledge to properly evaluate the effective balance of energy sources, says Curry, "their voices are drowned out by those with vested interests in wind and solar technology who garner considerable support from those ideologically inclined to support renewables regardless of impact."

Hiserodt agrees, and posits that the best way to ensure against another catastrophe is to stop all government subsidies and let the playing field level itself. In predicting the outcome, he points to leftist



Written by [Rebecca Terrell](#) on March 5, 2021

Published in the March 22, 2021 issue of [the New American](#) magazine. Vol. 37, No. 06

investor Warren Buffet, who once infamously stated: “We get a tax credit if we build a lot of wind farms. That’s the only reason to build them. They don’t make sense without the tax credit.”

What a Gas

Yet government waste is not the most scandalous aspect of DOE’s willingness to sacrifice people’s lives in its unremitting crusade to save Mother Earth. The real outrage lies in the fact that limiting greenhouse gases, particularly carbon dioxide (CO₂), does absolutely nothing to help the planet. In fact, as The New American has reported countless times, CO₂ is not a pollutant but a remarkable benefit to life on Earth. Far from being a poison, it is instead plant food.

The U.S. National Aeronautics & Space Administration (NASA) bragged in 2016 that “a quarter to half of Earth’s vegetated lands has shown significant greening over the last 35 years largely due to rising levels of atmospheric carbon dioxide.” It credited CO₂ “fertilization” for 70 percent of the increased vegetation. NASA gave nitrogen second-place mention at nine percent, which is noteworthy considering that gas makes up nearly 80 percent of the atmosphere, whereas CO₂ accounts for a mere 0.04 percent.



NASA

However, mankind cannot take credit for NASA’s boast. According to the nonprofit think tank National Center for Policy Analysis, man-made CO₂ amounts to 3.5 percent of all the carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. That means 96.5 percent comes from natural sources such as decomposition, respiration, and ocean release. So even if the human contribution doubled, it would still only be seven percent of 0.04 percent — statistically insignificant.

Unfortunately, it seems unlikely in today’s landscape that these facts will impact political or regulatory policies. But there is good news, as Terence Corcoran writes in the *Financial Post*: The “Texas crisis will reshape energy policy-making everywhere as the wind-power collapse puts renewables under scrutiny.” He points out that shares of large renewable corporations dropped precipitously after the crisis, and that Abbott, heretofore a wind energy champion, has cast a scornful eye at his once-favorite child. Moreover, the EIA praised coal and nuclear with keeping much of the power flowing during the storm.

“Renewable advocates are scrambling to the defense of wind and solar, but the Texas case joins others around the world that suggest the great stampede to build wind and solar, fueled by massive



Written by [Rebecca Terrell](#) on March 5, 2021

Published in the March 22, 2021 issue of [the New American](#) magazine. Vol. 37, No. 06

government subsidies and price-fixing regimes, comes with risks,” notes Corcoran. He highlights Germany’s growing problem of significant shortfalls in supply with the attendant increased risk of blackouts and price distortions — a landscape alarmingly similar to that in Texas, as well as in Britain, Australia, and Canada, where renewables thrive at the excessive expense of both taxpayers and consumers.

As renewable-generated problems hit more people in the pocketbook, there is reason to anticipate energy-wise decisions in the future. Let’s just hope that happens before additional lives are sacrificed on the altar of renewable energy.



Written by [Rebecca Terrell](#) on March 5, 2021

Published in the March 22, 2021 issue of [the New American](#) magazine. Vol. 37, No. 06

Subscribe to the New American

Get exclusive digital access to the most informative, non-partisan truthful news source for patriotic Americans!

Discover a refreshing blend of time-honored values, principles and insightful perspectives within the pages of "The New American" magazine. Delve into a world where tradition is the foundation, and exploration knows no bounds.

From politics and finance to foreign affairs, environment, culture, and technology, we bring you an unparalleled array of topics that matter most.



[Subscribe](#)

What's Included?

- 24 Issues Per Year
- Optional Print Edition
- Digital Edition Access
- Exclusive Subscriber Content
- Audio provided for all articles
- Unlimited access to past issues
- Coming Soon! Ad FREE
- 60-Day money back guarantee!
- Cancel anytime.