

Obama's deceitful, unsustainable energy decrees

Wind and solar reap taxpayer loot, while hydrocarbon energy, industries and jobs get pummeled
Paul Driessen

“That’s not the American way. That’s not progress. That’s not innovation. That’s rent-seeking and trying to protect old ways of doing business, and standing in the way of the future.”

That wasn’t the *Wall Street Journal* lambasting the mandate- and subsidy-dependent renewable energy consortium. It was [President Obama](#) demonizing critics of his plans to replace carbon-based energy with wind, solar and biofuels, stymie the hydraulic fracturing revolution that’s given the United States another century of oil and gas – and “fundamentally transform” and downsize the US and global economies.

The president thinks this legacy will offset the Iran, Iraq, Islamic State and other policy debacles he will bequeath to his successors. His presidential [library exhibits](#) won’t likely mention those foreign policy fiascoes or the ways his energy policies mostly benefit the richest 1% of Americans, especially political cronies and campaign contributors – while [crippling the economy](#) and pummeling millions of families and businesses that depend on reliable, affordable oil, gas and coal energy for their income and welfare.

Mr. Obama and his regulators have already imposed enormous financial, labor, ozone, water, climate, power generation and other burdens on our economy – mostly with trifling benefits that exist only in computer models, White House press releases, and rosy reports from advocacy groups that receive billions of dollars from his Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Energy and other agencies. On August 24, he announced another [billion-dollar program](#) to force America to produce 20% of its electricity from renewable sources by 2030: mostly wind and solar, plus a little more geothermal and biomass.

Those sources now provide less than 8% of all electricity, so this is a monumental increase. If the president wants to take credit for any alleged benefits, he must also accept blame for the abysmal failures.

One of the biggest is [Solyndra](#), the solar company that got \$535 million in taxpayer-guaranteed loans just before it went belly-up. A [four-year investigation](#) found that Solyndra falsified its financials, sales outlook and other business dealings and omitted material facts. However, the Department of Energy failed in its due diligence obligations and apparently buckled under White House pressure to approve the financing.

Par for the course, though, the Justice Department will not seek criminal indictments of any Solyndra officials, nor penalize any DOE apparatchiks for their willing incompetence. After all, a principal investor in the company (George Kaiser) was a major donor to Obama campaigns.

Of course, [dozens of other companies](#) also dined at the federal trough, before going under and costing us taxpayers [many billions of dollars](#). But the administration wants more money and mandates – and more rules that destroy conventional energy competitors – to drive his climate and “transformation” agendas.

Meanwhile, he ignores the one truly and steadily innovative business that has generated real energy, jobs, wealth and tax revenues during his presidency – and largely kept the tepid Obama economy afloat: fracking. In fact, his bureaucrats are working to ban the technology on federal lands and regulate it into a marginal role elsewhere, even as the industry reduces its water use, keeps gasoline prices low, finds ways to produce oil at \$45 per barrel, and proves its practices [do not contaminate drinking water](#).

The president also ignores inconvenient facts about his “clean, eco-friendly” renewable energy utopia. For example, wind and solar facilities require vast land acreage and are increasingly moving into sensitive wildlife habitats, threatening protected and endangered birds, bats and other species.

The proposed 550-mile Atlantic Coast natural gas pipeline from West Virginia shale gas fields across Virginia to southern North Carolina would impact about [4,600 acres](#) (12% of the District of Columbia), and nearly all that land would be restored to croplands or grassy habitats as soon as the pipe is laid. The fuel is destined mostly for existing gas-fired electrical generating units on a few hundred total acres. If all that gas were used to generate electricity, it would produce 190,500 megawatt-hours of electricity per day.

In stark contrast, generating the same electricity with wind would require 46,000 400-foot turbines on some 475,000 acres of land – plus thousands of acres of towering transmission lines to urban centers hundreds of miles away. They would be permanent and highly visible eyesores and wildlife killers,

crossing deforested mountain ridges and scenic areas, and generating electricity maybe 20% of the time. Building them would require millions of tons of concrete, iron, copper, rare earth metals from China's ruined [Baotou region](#), and petroleum for the monstrous bird- and bat-chopping turbine blades.

Energy analyst [Robert Bryce says](#) meeting the Obama EPA's Clean Power Plan emission goals would require blanketing 34 million acres (an area larger than New York State) with wind turbines.

[A 2013 study](#) estimates that US wind turbines already kill some 573,000 birds a year – 83,000 of them bald and golden eagles and other raptors. Far better data from Europe, however, suggests that the annual US death toll is closer to 13 million birds and bats. And our wildlife agencies exempt wind companies from endangered species and other environmental laws. More turbines will multiply the carnage.

Moreover, we would still need the gas-fired units, operating inefficiently on standby spinning reserve status and going to full power dozens of times daily, whenever the wind stops blowing. Ditto for solar.

Using solar panels to generate 190,500 MWH per day would require 1.7 million acres of land – akin to blanketing Delaware and Rhode Island with habitat-destroying panels – plus long transmission lines and gas-fired units. Los Angeles recently refused to buy power from a much smaller 2,557-acre [solar project](#) proposed for the Mojave Desert, because of impacts on desert tortoises and bighorn sheep.

President Obama never mentions any of this – or the fact that greater natural gas use is [reducing carbon dioxide](#) emissions, which he claims have replaced the sun and other powerful natural forces in driving climate change. This April, US CO2 emissions fell to their lowest level for any month in 27 years. But now that he's sent coal marching toward history's ash heap, natural gas is next on his target list.

To top it off, all the billions of dollars, crony corporatism, campaign cash for helpful politicians, feed-in tariffs and Renewable Fuel Standards (mandates and diktats) – and all the habitat and wildlife impacts – will raise the wind, solar, geothermal and biomass share of the nation's energy mix from 8% today to only 10% in 2040, to supply our growing population, Energy Information Administration [analysts project](#).

Since 2006, US households received [over \\$18 billion](#) just in federal income tax credits for weatherizing homes, installing solar panels, buying hybrid and electric vehicles, and other “clean energy” investments. But the bottom 60% of families received only 10% of this loot; the top 10% got 60% of the total and 90% of the subsidies and tax credits for ultra-expensive electric vehicles, like the \$132,000 Tesla Model S. Worse, that \$18 billion could have drilled wells to provide [safe drinking water](#) for five billion people!

The United States depends on energy-rich fossil fuels, plus nuclear and hydroelectric power – not pie-in-the-sky ideas or smoke-and-mirrors solutions to imaginary climate catastrophes. So does the [rest of the world](#). We cannot afford pseudo-environmental ideologies, climate fabrications and dictatorial decrees.

Germany's Energiewende (mandated energy transformation) program also seeks to replace coal and nuclear energy with wind, solar and biofuels. It has made German electricity prices (including \$31.5 billion in hidden annual subsidies) nearly ten times higher than in US states that still rely on coal for power generation. The program has already killed countless jobs and threatens to send still more energy-intensive companies overseas – to countries that justifiably refuse to slash their hydrocarbon use, CO2 emissions or economic growth in the name of controlling Earth's eternally changing climate.

Every winter, German, British and other European policies literally [kill thousands](#) of poor and elderly people who can no longer afford to heat their homes properly. Where *is* that vaunted [liberal compassion](#)?

Why would the United States want to proceed lemming-like down a similarly delusional energy pathway to economic ruin and the needless deaths of birds, bats and our most vulnerable citizens? Other than reelecting Mr. Obama, what did we do to deserve this? And how can we undo the damage?

Paul Driessen is senior policy analyst for the Committee For A Constructive Tomorrow, author of [Eco-Imperialism](#): Green power - Black death, and coauthor of [Cracking Big Green: Saving the world from the Save-the-Earth money machine](#).