

Is the Surge in Renewable Energy in Texas About to Come to an End?

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While Texas correctly has the reputation of being a state focused on oil and gas, it has also become the leading state in terms of renewable energy generation. In 2022 Texas generated over 136,000 GWh of wind and solar energy - with wind representing 115,000 GWh, by far the highest of any state. California was a distant second in renewables, with 53,000 GWh, about 35,000 of that from solar. Wind & Solar accounted for 26% of all Texas energy generation in 2022, and estimates are that this year renewables (including a small amount of hydropower) could account for close to 40% of Texas energy production. But the conservative Texas state government is trying to do what it can to slow the growth of Wind and Solar - and speed up the growth of Gas.



Multiple bills are being pursued to accomplish this. One bill would require all meaningful wind and solar projects to win the approval of the Texas Public Utility Commission, whose members are appointed by the fossil fuel industry supporting governor. New projects would be subject to a state environmental impact review by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and developers would be required to pay a yearly fee and obtain new permits whenever they make meaningful changes to existing projects. The bill would also require wind turbines to be built at least 3,000 feet from any property lines.

Another bill establishes the Texas Energy Insurance Program which calls for spending taxpayer dollars to build a fleet of new gas-fired power plants for backup power when needed; these plants would be expected to sit idle more than 97 percent of the time. In addition, this bill would keep older natural gas plants online so they can also provide backup. Another bill would replace the state's multibillion-dollar corporate tax break program with a new version that excludes wind and solar energy projects, preventing them from taking advantage of the incentives.

Still another piece of proposed Texas legislation provides incentives for private companies to set up energy plants that can launch within 2 hours and run for at least 4. The key word in this legislation is dispatchable, referring to energy sources that can be turned on and put into effect at all hours of the day – which is meant to specifically exclude wind and solar.

Enough said.