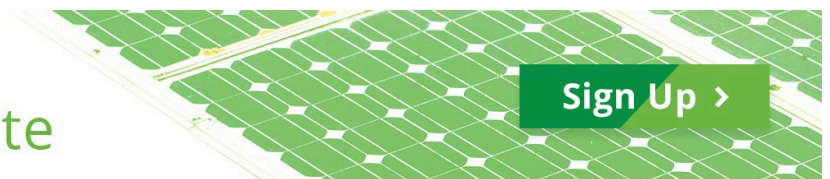


Renewable Energy Advocates Learn To Not Say “Climate Change” In Texas

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Renewable energy, particularly wind power, has been hugely successful in Texas, thanks in large measure to a combination of federal, state, and local incentives that began more than two decades ago. Those incentives included both wind turbines and grid interconnection links, so the electricity generated by the winds in rural areas can power homes and businesses in cities like Dallas.

“Texas was really a world leader in figuring out how to solve the chicken-and-the-egg problem,” Dan Cohan, a professor of civil and environmental engineering at Rice University tells *KUT News*. “No one wanted to build wind farms when there weren’t enough transmission lines to carry power to the cities, and no one wanted to build transmission lines where there weren’t any wind farms.”

Is There A Pattern Here?

In case you missed it, subsidies for solar, wind, and electric cars are under attack by shills for the fossil fuel companies. Shills like Bill Peacock, who bills himself as vice president of research for the Texas Public Policy Foundation. That’s one of those so-called think tanks that cranks out reams and reams

of fake “research” bought and paid for by their financial supporters.

Here’s how it works. A benefactor says “I will pay you X amount of money if you will produce a report that says Y.” If the report supports that result, the group gets more funding. If not, funding is cut off and the benefactor goes in search of other people who will shut up and do what they are told. And who is propping up TPPF? According to a report published in the *Texas Observer*, a good chunk of its funding comes from Koch Industries and ExxonMobil. Surprise, surprise.

The TPPF is bombarding the Texas legislature with misinformation designed to show that subsidies for renewable energy are bad for the state. “Wind is bringing prices down, but not in a good way,” Peacock says. What he means is that there is so much of it that prices for renewable energy are tumbling. That in turn discourages utility companies from building new conventional power plants.

We have heard echoes of that refrain in recent remarks by the alleged president, who likes to tell his adoring fans, “Let’s put up some windmills. When the wind doesn’t blow, just turn off the television darling, please. There’s no wind, please turn off the television quickly.” The source of both is the same – disinformation put out by the fossil fuel industry and their paid toadies.

“You can make anything not look great without context,” Joshua Rhodes, a research fellow at the Energy Institute at UT Austin tells *KUT News*. It’s simplistic and misleading to advocate for a reduction in renewable energy incentives without making the same argument about fossil fuel incentives. But hypocrisy is the stock in trade for organizations like TPPF. Why Texas legislators don’t laugh in the face of such buffoons is a great mystery. Could they share the same source of funding? Hmmmm...

Rhodes adds that low-cost renewable energy has been good for Texas consumers. “The cheaper energy is, the more growth we can have in the economy. So just because a new technology is pushing an old technology out [doesn’t make it] a market failure; it’s just the market working.”

Don’t Say Climate Change In Texas

Rhodes points out that renewable energy advocates in Texas have learned to avoid the words climate change. “There are certain aspects of the country that aren’t ready to talk about it yet. The idea is that if you can win your arguments based on price and efficiency, for some people, that’s just going to be better received than talking about climate change.”

Asked about that dreaded subject, Bill Peacock paused and then said, “I’m concerned about the damage renewable energy subsidies are doing to the marketplace.” In other words, he is scared to death to say anything that might lessen the flow of petrodollars into the coffers of TPPF, money that will be used to pay his salary. There is a word for someone who sells himself for money. Can you think what it is?

Unprecedented

“What we’re seeing is somewhat unprecedented,” says Jeffrey Clark, director of the Advanced Power Alliance, a renewable energy advocacy group. “It is a very organized, very well-funded effort to slander renewable energy in Texas. We have seen a lot of money come into the state hidden by organizations that use their nonprofit, their charitable status, to lobby against renewable energy.”

Oddly enough, the Advanced Power Alliance also represents natural gas companies. So what fossil fuels is TPPF shilling for? A possible answer may be found by researching some of the organization’s more recent activities, including one called Life:Powered. According to *DeSmog*, it is run by Bernard

McNamee, who formerly worked as deputy general counsel for energy policy under Secretary Rick Perry at the Department of Energy. TPPF's 2017 annual report says Life:Powered was originally the "Fueling Freedom" project, which launched in 2015 "to combat the Obama-era Clean Power Plan."

Clean power plan? Didn't that have something to do with...hold on, it's right on the tip of my tongue. Oh, yeah. CCP is for you and me and that rhymes with C and that stands for Coal. It's all becoming clear to me now.



Tags: Bill Peacock, Energy Institute University of Texas, ExxonMobil, koch brothers, Renewable Energy, Texas Public Policy Foundation, wind power in Texas

About the Author

Steve Hanley Steve writes about the interface between technology and sustainability from his home in Rhode Island and anywhere else the Singularity may lead him. His motto is, "Life is not measured by how many breaths we take but by the number of moments that take our breath away!" You can follow him on Google + and on Twitter.

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