

Let's Utilize All the Tools In the Energy Toolbox

Unfortunately increasing public resistance to the use of coal due to its potential risks to the environment has somewhat hampered efforts to utilize this abundant resource and it has left the general public with the belief that coal is quickly becoming an extinct and ancient form of energy production. This is simply not true.

To understand the role that coal plays in our lives, powering our businesses and our homes, we need not look any further than our own state. Texas currently has approximately 18 active lignite coal mines employing more than 2,241 workers, generating over \$167 million in wages. According to the US Department of Energy Information Administration, coal accounts for 52% of the nation's electricity an estimated 1,994,385 Megawatt-hours, and Texas accounts for a large portion of those Megawatt-hours produced from coal.

Gov. Rick Perry and Texas legislators have done a great job in promoting "Clean-Coal Technologies." Yes there is such a thing! According to the Clean Coal Technology Foundation of Texas a combination of key legislation from the 80th and 81st legislative sessions, most notably HB 469 and key elements of SB 2111, establishes a two-tiered incentive package for clean coal projects in Texas. Any project that captures at least 50% of their CO₂ emissions are eligible for sales tax exemptions for the equipment that captures, transports, and stores their CO₂. Also, HB 1796 sets in motion an offshore carbon repository program that will ensure Texas becomes a leader in the capture and sequestration of CO₂. These efforts should stimulate the economy and serve as yet another path to energy independence? Without the overarching "fear" that the sky is falling, as some would have us believe.

I believe ignoring the abundance of coal and the promise of Clean Coal Technology is tantamount to simply burying your head in the sand while succumbing to the pressure of the environmental fringe. It is my humble opinion that the real goal should be to balance and blend the responsible utilization of energy resources while maintaining a strong vibrant economy and protecting private property rights, not protecting ideology. The fact is any comprehensive energy plan must utilize all of the tools in the states energy toolbox, wind, solar, nuclear, domestic oil, natural gas, and yes, even COAL.

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