

## **As Extremely Cold Weather Drives Texas's Electric Grid To Its Breaking Point, Big Oil Is Financing The Lie That Renewables Are To Blame**

**SUMMARY:** *As Texas reels from cold weather-induced grid failure and millions are without power, its elected officials are taking to right-wing media to falsely blame renewable energy. Research shows that the elected officials spreading this disinformation share one thing in common – their campaigns are funded by the oil and gas industry.*

### **Extreme Cold Weather Is Actively Grinding Texas's Electric Grid To A Halt, Leaving Millions Of People Without Electricity As Temperatures Drop**

#### **Texas Is At The Center Of A Massive Power Outage And May Have Seen Gas Lines Frozen Or Gas Supplies Rerouted To Homes That Rely On Gas For Heat.**

**Texas Is At The Center Of Massive Power Outages.** "In Texas, the center of a wave of outages across the Southern and central parts of the U.S., the primary electric grid suffered a one-two punch wrought by the deep freeze: off-the-charts demand for power as Texans tried to heat their homes and power plants that simply failed to produce power when people needed it the most." [NBC News, [02/17/21](#)]

**Gas Lines May Have Frozen Or Gas May Have Been Prioritized To Homes That Rely On Gas For Heating.** "The picture of what went wrong in Texas is incomplete. But while some wind generators did go offline as turbines iced over, the state's largest grid, the Electric Reliability Council of Texas, said the shortage was driven by a failure not of renewable sources but of traditional 'thermal' sources: coal, nuclear and especially natural gas. Energy experts said that gas lines supplying gas-fired plants may have frozen or that supplies to the plants may have been limited as gas was prioritized for homes that rely on gas for their heat." [NBC News, [02/17/21](#)]

**Problems With Grid Caused By A Lack Of Investment With The Deregulated Power System.** "As Texas governor Greg Abbott ordered an investigation into the failures of the grid, Ed Hirs, an energy fellow at the University of Houston, said the problem was caused by lack of investment in the state's deregulated power system. Texas is alone in having its own grid. The other lower 48 states are connected to either the eastern or western interconnection grids, and can draw on power supplies across state lines when necessary." [Guardian, [02/17/21](#)]

- **Grid "Limped Along On Underinvestment And Neglect" Until It "Collapsed In Exactly The Same Manner As The Old Soviet Union."** "The Ercot grid has collapsed in exactly the same manner as the old Soviet Union," said Hirs. "It limped along on underinvestment and neglect until it finally broke under predictable circumstances." [Guardian, [02/17/21](#)]

## **Right Wing Media And Some Elected Officials Are Falsely Blaming The Disaster In Texas On Renewable Energy, Contradicting The Agency That Runs Texas's Grid**

### **News Outlets Such As Fox News And The Wall Street Journal Blamed Renewables And A Greater Reliance On Wind And Solar Energy...**

Conservative News Outlets Including Fox News And The Wall Street Journal Blamed Renewable Energy, Including Wind And Solar Power For Power Issues. "Fox News also joined in with one of its presenters, Tucker Carlson, claiming that renewables were to blame and that Texas was 'totally reliant on windfarms'. The Wall Street Journal said in an editorial that 'the power grid is becoming less reliable due to growing reliance on wind and solar, which can't provide power 24 hours a day, seven days a week'." [Guardian, [02/17/21](#)]

### **...While The Electric Reliability Council Of Texas (ERCOT) Blamed Failures On Natural Gas, Coal And Nuclear Energy.**

The Electric Reliability Council Of Texas (ERCOT) Said Failures In Natural Gas, Coal And Nuclear Energy Were Responsible For Nearly Twice As Many Outages. "While some wind turbines did freeze, failures in natural gas, coal and nuclear energy systems were responsible for nearly twice as many outages as renewables, the Electric Reliability Council of Texas (Ercot), which operates the state's power grid, said in a press conference on Tuesday." [Guardian, [02/17/21](#)]

- **ERCOT Specifically Cited Frozen Instruments At Gas, Coal And Nuclear Stations As Among "The Main Problems.** "Frozen instruments at gas, coal and even nuclear power stations were among the main problems, Ercot director Dan Woodfin said, according to Bloomberg.' [Guardian, [02/17/21](#)]

### **ERCOT Is The Name Of Both The Texas Grid And The Agency That Runs It.**

Texas Has Its Own Electric Grid. "Texas' secessionist inclinations do have one modern outlet: the electric grid. There are three grids in the Lower 48 states: the Eastern Interconnection, the Western Interconnection — and Texas." [Texas Tribune, [02/16/21](#)]

- **Both The Grid And The Agency That Runs It Is Called ERCOT.** "The Texas grid is called ERCOT, and it is run by an agency of the same name — the Electric Reliability Council of Texas. ERCOT does not actually cover all of Texas. El Paso is on another grid, as is the upper Panhandle and a chunk of East Texas. This presumably has to do with the history of various utilities' service territories and the remoteness of the non-ERCOT locations (for example the Panhandle is closer to Kansas than to Dallas, notes Kenneth Starcher of the Alternative Energy Institute in Canyon), but Texplainer is still figuring out the particulars on this." [Texas Tribune, [02/16/21](#)]
- **The History Of The Separation Of The Texas Grid From The Rest Of The Country Has To Do With The Origins Of Electric Utilities.** "The separation of the Texas grid from the rest of

the country has its origins in the evolution of electric utilities early last century. In the decades after Thomas Edison turned on the country's first power plant in Manhattan in 1882, small generating plants sprouted across Texas, bringing electric light to cities. Later, particularly during the first world war, utilities began to link themselves together. These ties, and the accompanying transmission network, grew further during the second world war, when several Texas utilities joined together to form the Texas Interconnected System, which allowed them to link to the big dams along Texas rivers and also send extra electricity to support the ramped-up factories aiding the war effort." [Texas Tribune, [02/16/21](#)]

### **The Politicians Pushing The Lie Are All Funded By The Oil And Gas Industry—Some Taking In Tens Of Millions Over Their Careers**

#### **Texas Governor Greg Abbott Said The Current Situation Showed Why The Green New Deal Would Be "Deadly" For The United States. The Oil Industry Has Given His Campaigns Nearly \$22 Million**

Texas Governor Greg Abbott Blamed The Green New Deal, Which Has Not Seen The Senate Floor For More Than Two Years For His State's Woes. "As millions of his constituents went without power amid freezing temperatures for a second straight night, Texas governor Greg Abbott went on Fox News on Tuesday to warn viewers about a resolution that hasn't seen the Senate floor in over two years....In an interview with Sean Hannity, Abbott gave an explanation for why his state's current crisis exposes the flaws in a massive shift toward renewable energy. 'This shows how the Green New Deal would be a deadly deal for the United States of America,' Abbott said. He noted that the wind and solar energy that was shut down amid the polar vortex were "collectively more than 10 percent of our power grid,'" and when they failed, it resulted in a system-wide collapse. 'It just shows that fossil fuel is necessary for the state of Texas as well as other states to make sure we'll be able to heat our homes in the winter time and cool our homes in the summer time,' Abbott concluded." [New York Magazine, [02/17/21](#)]

- **The Green New Deal Is Not In Place And The Weather Is To Blame For Gas Pipelines Freezing When Supplies Are Needed The Most.** "The argument suffers from two main flaws. Like the common conservative claim last fall that protests against police brutality that took place under Donald Trump were a vision of the Biden administration to come, Abbott is warning about the future threat of the Green New Deal — despite the reality that the massive power failure occurred under his watch, with no such legislation in place. More directly, Abbott's math about the current grid's limits does not add up. Though the claim that wind turbines shut down by the cold caused the outage has been repeated frequently on the right this week, it is primarily the weather-related failure of the state's natural gas infrastructure that has resulted in the crisis, as pipelines froze in the season in which they are most heavily relied upon." [New York Magazine, [02/17/21](#)]

**Greg Abbott Has Received \$21,844,349 From The Oil And Gas Industry During His Career In Public Office.** [FollowTheMoney, accessed [02/17/21](#)]

## **Texas Representative Dan Crenshaw Blamed Wind And Other Renewable Energy Sources. He's Taken In A Half A Million From The Oil Industry.**

Texas Congressman Dan Crenshaw Claimed Wind Turbines Had To Be "De-Iced" And That Existing Wind Energy In Batteries Were "Depleted Because The Batteries Could Not Handle" The Extremely Cold Weather. "[Texas Representative Dan] Crenshaw added that some wind turbines in West Texas had to be 'de-iced,' leading to a drop in wind power from 31 gigawatts to 6, and the existing wind energy stored in batteries was also depleted because the batteries could not handle the cold weather." [Fox Business, [02/17/21](#)]

Crenshaw Also Blamed "Years Of Federal Subsidies For Wind," Which Caused An "Over-Reliance' On Wind As An Energy Source. The congressman blamed the state's infrastructure shortfalls this week on 'years of federal subsidies for wind' that has led to an 'over-reliance' on the clean energy source "and an under-investment in new gas and nuclear plants,' adding that fossil fuels 'are the only thing" that saved the state's residents from freezing." [Fox Business, [02/17/21](#)]

Wind Energy Is Only A Fraction Of The State's Energy-Creating Capability Loss. "The Texas Tribune on Wednesday noted that the lack of wind energy available in Texas right now makes up only a fraction of the total loss of the state's power-generating capabilities that has left millions without power." [Fox Business, [02/17/21](#)]

- **ERCOT Said That Texas Had Lost 16 Gigawatts Of Energy From Wind Vs. 30 Gigawatts Of Energy Form Nuclear, Gas And Coal Energy Sources.** "The outlet cited the Electric Reliability Council of Texas, which said Tuesday that Texas had lost 16 gigawatts of energy from wind turbines versus 30 gigawatts from nuclear, gas and coal energy." [Fox Business, [02/17/21](#)]

**Dan Crenshaw Has Taken In Over \$.5 Million In Contributions From The Oil Industry.** Dan Crenshaw's career contributions from the oil and gas industry total \$574,505. [Center For Responsive Politics, accessed [02/17/21](#)]

## **Texas Senator John Cornyn Tried To Blame Interior Secretary Nominee Haaland's For Texas's Blackouts. He's Taken In Over \$4.5 Million From The Oil Industry.**

Texas Senator John Cornyn Tweeted A Quote Tweet Of Himself Sharing An Article That Reported On Congresswoman Deb Haaland, Now Interior Secretary Nominee, For Protesting Pipelines, Asking "What Are Her Plans For Rolling Blackouts During Cold Weather?" [John Cornyn Twitter Account, [02/15/21](#)]



[John Cornyn Twitter Account, [02/15/21](#)]

**Interior Oversees Management And Conservation Of Federal Lands While The Energy Department Would Be In Charge Of Responding To “Rolling Blackouts.”** “Several people pointed out that the Interior Secretary is responsible for overseeing the management and conservation of federal lands. The Energy Department would be in charge of responding to ‘rolling blackouts’.” [Texas Signal, [02/16/21](#)]

**John Cornyn Has Taken In Over \$4.5 Million In Contributions From The Oil Industry.** John Cornyn’s career contributions from the oil and gas industry total \$4,506,733. [Center For Responsive Politics, accessed [02/17/21](#)]

### **Former Texas Governor And Energy Secretary Rick Perry Blamed Wind And Solar Energy. Big Oil Funded His Failed Presidential Campaign**

**Former Texas Governor Rick Perry Blamed Wind And Solar Energy And Said “The Last 48 Hours Ought To Give Everybody A Real Pause.”** “[Former Texas Governor Rick] Perry, former president Donald Trump’s energy secretary, however, blamed the rolling blackouts on the rise of wind and solar energy in Texas. “If wind and solar is where we’re headed, the last 48 hours ought to give everybody a real pause and go wait a minute,” Perry said. “We need to have a baseload. And the only way you can get a baseload in this country is [with] natural gas, coal, and nuclear.” [Houston Chronicle, [02/17/21](#)]

- **University Of Texas Professor Said That Wind Turbines Performed Better Than Anticipated.** “That argument has been made by numerous conservatives in the midst of the blackouts. But it does not line up with early reports indicating the majority of the lost generation was natural gas plants not wind turbines, which actually performed better than grid regulators had anticipated, said Michael Webber an energy professor at the University of Texas.” [Houston Chronicle, [02/17/21](#)]

**Rick Perry Received \$12,272,210 From The Oil And Gas Industry During His Time In Public Office.** [FollowTheMoney, accessed [02/17/21](#)]

- **The Oil Industry Was Rick Perry’s Top Contributor During His 2016 Presidential Race, Doling Out \$1.6 Million.** Rick Perry’s 2016 presidential campaign raised

\$1,647,425 from the oil and gas industry, making oil his top funder. [Center for Responsive Politics, accessed [02/17/21](#)]

### **Senator Steve Daines Said The Disaster In Texas Was A "Perfect Example" Of The Need For Natural Gas. The Industry Has Given Him \$1.2 Million**

**Sen. Steve Daines Used The Blackouts In Texas As An Excuse To Praise Gas And Coal Energy.** "Texas is frozen solid as folks are left w/ no power to stay safe & warm. This is a perfect example of the need for reliable energy sources like natural gas & coal. These blackouts would be devastating to MT. No heat & no power simply are not options in the dead of winter." [Twitter, @SteveDaines, [02/16/21](#)]

**Daines Went On To Attack Interior Secretary Nominee Deb Haaland** "This is exactly why @JoeBiden's nomination for @Interior is extremely alarming. Rep. Haaland has called for the elimination of oil, natural gas AND coal. America can not afford this radical transition away from reliable energy." [Twitter, @SteveDaines, [02/16/21](#)]

**Steve Daines Has Received \$1,204,278 From The Oil And Gas Industry During His Career In Public Office.** [OpenSecrets, accessed [02/17/21](#)]

### **An Oil Industry Association Also Promoted The Lie That Texas's Electric Grid Problems Were The Result Of Renewables**

**WEA's President Tweeted, "Enjoying A Warm Home Today?? Thank A Natural Gas Producer."** On the day of Texas's extreme cold weather and electrical grid shutdown, WEA president Kathleen Sgamma tweeted, "Enjoying a warm home today? Thank a natural gas producer." She shared an article with the headline, "This Blizzard Exposes The Perils Of Attempting To 'Electrify Everything.'" [Twitter, [02/15/21](#)]

### **One Oil Company With Ties To The American Petroleum Institute Bragged About "Jackpot" Profits From The Storm**

**A Representative From Comstock Resources Said The Price Spike Caused By The Storm Was "Like Hitting The Jackpot."** "While millions in Texas are without power due to a deadly winter storm that has brought record low temperatures to the state, the chief financial officer at Jerry Jones' natural gas company can only think about money. Roland Burns, CFO at Comstock Resources Inc., reportedly bragged that the week has been 'like hitting the jackpot,' according to the Dallas Morning News. 'This week is like hitting the jackpot with some of these incredible prices,' Burns said. 'Frankly, we were able to sell at super premium prices for a material amount of production.'" [Yahoo News, [02/17/21](#)]

- **One Of Comstock's Board Members Is Also A Member Of API.** "Morris E. Foster is a businessperson who has been the head of 6 different companies and is

Chairman for Mill Creek Resort, Chairman of Stagecoach Properties, Inc., Chairman of Stagecoach Holding LLC and President at Exxon Upstream Development Co. Mr. Foster is also on the board of Comstock Resources, Inc., Scott & White Healthcare, United Way of the Texas Gulf Coast and First State Bank in Temple (Oklahoma) and Member of Society of Petroleum Engineers, Inc., Member of American Petroleum Institute, Inc. and Member-Regents Board at Texas A&M University." [Wall Street Journal, accessed [03/10/21](#)]