

## Clean Energy, Pipelines and Politics

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In our reflections on infrastructure, energy, buildings, sustainability, transportation, and climate, we attempt to throw daylight on information which in the past few years has been rife with dog-whistles, gaslighting, fear mongering and “alternate facts”. For example, no facts support claims that canceling the Keystone Pipeline cost thousands of long-term American jobs. The facts show that the number of permanent jobs the pipeline would have created would number less than 50. We wrote about this in the Trail Gazette January 29, 2021. (<https://www.eprail.com/2022/03/09/together-we-build-cancelling-keystone-xl-pipeline-makes-good-business-sense/> ) Yesterday in her daily Letters from an American newsletter, historian Heather Cox Richardson discusses the current oil and gas situation with historical accuracy, including Keystone details of which we were previously unaware. For fact-based information read her newsletter and sources. ([https://heathercoxrichardson.substack.com/p/march-8-2022?r=f9js7&s=r&utm\\_campaign=post&utm\\_medium=email](https://heathercoxrichardson.substack.com/p/march-8-2022?r=f9js7&s=r&utm_campaign=post&utm_medium=email))

In the current global situation, any dependence on foreign gas and oil imports needs to be reconsidered. But the answer is not necessarily to dramatically increase domestic production of fossil fuels, which will have zero short term impact on prices and supply. We should double down on our efforts to transition away from fossil fuels by dramatically increasing our green energy production. According to EIA, the U.S. Energy Information Administration, the “U.S. liquified natural gas export capacity will be world’s largest by end of 2022.” (<https://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.php?> ) This is highlighted in the March 4, 2022, New York Times newsletter, Climate Forward: What Putin’s war could mean for fossil fuels, by Somini Sengupta. She reports on a European Union (E.U.) draft proposal to “swiftly renovate old, leaky buildings to reduce energy demand, simplify regulations to attract investments in renewable energy, encourage more rooftop solar installations and produce more energy from biomass.” That the war started by Russia has accelerated serious consideration of fast-tracking alternatives to fossil fuels is a silver lining in an otherwise horrendous situation.

Sengupta also references a colleague’s article regarding the oil and gas industry jumping on the fears that we will run out of reliable and affordable gas.

(<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/26/climate/ukraine-oil-lobby-biden-drilling.html> ) “It’s pretty rich for the oil and gas industry to talk about how reliable fossil fuels are when any big storm that happens, any time a war pops up, their reliability is thrown into question...”

The oil and gas lobby has shifted into overdrive. Yesterday on Colorado Public Radio (CPR) we heard about a coalition called Coloradans for Energy Access.

(<https://www.cpr.org/2022/03/07/colorado-natural-gas-stoves-furnaces-corporate-lobbying/>) CPR’s piece says “Colorado appears to be the latest state where the fossil fuel industry is seeking to pass off a corporate influence campaign as a grassroots effort to support consumer access to natural gas.” CPR goes on to say “Atmos Energy, the nation’s largest gas-only utility, is a leading force inside the 23-member coalition.” This story followed an op-ed in the Colorado Sun. written by businesses whose intent is to plant the seed that transitions from gas to electricity in stoves and furnaces is bad for the economy, for lower income customers, and would raise prices.

(<https://coloradosun.com/2022/01/25/colorado-energy-natural-gas-electricity-opinion/>) Even more disturbing is the quote in the CPR story regarding a webinar by a consulting firm “with a history of leading influence campaigns for the oil and gas industry” which is “ready to ghostwrite similar opinion pieces in the future.” (Full disclosure, my wife Laura Davis is the ghostwriter for this column, Together We Build.) Never mind that oil and gas has returned record profits to shareholders, as cited by Heather Cox Richardson and reported by Tom Wilson of Financial Times: “seven top oil companies, including BP, Shell, ExxonMobil, and Chevron, would return a near-record \$38 to \$41 billion to shareholders through stock buybacks, after distributing \$50 billion in dividends.”

When the US Senate and White House were controlled by the GOP, Senators had no issue with adding 7.8 trillion dollars to the deficit and giving the richest Americans huge tax breaks, which ultimately proved yet again that trickle-down economics doesn't work. Now, under a Democratic administration, those same Republicans are blaming inflation on the current administration and demanding reductions in programs which help the average American citizen, in order to reduce a deficit they had a large role in building. Meanwhile taxpayer funded fossil fuel subsidies continue to go to rich, powerful companies which can return tens of billions of dollars to their stockholders in a single year.

Yes, we are going to see higher prices at the gas pump for a while. The global energy impact of Russia's criminal invasion of its sovereign neighbor's territory is a fact. How we react to this situation is key. Are we going to ramp up alternatives to fossil fuels, or buy into the oil and gas industry line that we need to panic? Here in the US we need to ramp up using electric heat pumps for heating and cooling our living spaces and commercial buildings, which constitute a large percentage of greenhouse gas emissions. We need to accelerate constructing infrastructure for charging electric vehicles (EVs). Support of research, development and investment in innovation must be a top priority. The renovation and improved insulation of leaky buildings will not only help those with all electric energy use, but also the current majority that have gas furnaces. We also must remember that as we transition to clean, reliable new technologies we must accommodate education and training for those who must transition from fossil fuel-based businesses. The much larger number of jobs that green energy provides over jobs in the fossil fuel industry is a proven fact. The historic number of jobs that the current administration has added to the US economy is a proven fact. Don't let the dog-whistlers lead you to believe otherwise.

Beck, Thomas W. "[Clean Energy, Pipelines and Politics](https://www.eptrail.com/2022/07/23/together-we-build-clean-energy-pipelines-and-politics/)", *Estes Park Trail Gazette*, Friday July 23, 2022, <https://www.eptrail.com/2022/07/23/together-we-build-clean-energy-pipelines-and-politics/>