

The answer is not blowing in the wind

‘De pendere” is a loan-word; words from ancient languages largely unscathed over millennia. The Latin “de pendere” and “depend” both mean to place trust in or rely upon.

Depend does not mean a self-inflicted state where our crucible of freedom hemorrhages more than a \$1 trillion a year to nations that shun the luster created by keeping the lights on Lady Liberty. No dictionary says our future “depends” upon the cost of foreign fossil fuels.

Depend also does not mean self-induced stupor, torpor and lazy thinking like believing energy emancipation resides in the twang of an oil man talking sweeter than the Texas tea crude that made him a bazillionaire. Blindly following T. Boone’s self-serving advice to build a swath of wind turbines from the Dakotas to Texas, combined with domestically produced natural gas, will lead to him and one of his big investors, our intellectually and ethically challenged “Sneaker of the House,” picking and grinning all the way to the bank.

People have tried to rope and catch the wind for eons. It seems wind is clean and forever and substantial monetary and regulatory subsidies have propelled the industry to record growth and artificially improved its apparent economic benefit.

Wind turbines generate electricity proportionally to wind speed, starting at about 8 mph up to 55 mph. They can be located onshore or offshore, where wind is



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more constant, and require massive transmission infrastructure. Wind is not constant and thus only delivers about 30 to 40 percent of a turbine’s capability. Today, a 100-megawatt wind farm (about 60 turbines) could power about 35,000 homes in the Northeast and 18,000 homes in the South.

Although wind turbines have wrongly been compared to the cartoonish mythical contraptions of little practical value epitomized by mid 20th century cartoonist Rube Goldberg, they do have severe limitations in addition to their utility.

More than 70 percent of the nation’s most potent wind areas are in the Midwest with less than 5 percent of the country east of the Mississippi River having adequate wind levels. As these turbines spin, so does a roulette wheel of risk. Wind power is non-dispatchable. It cannot be turned on and off with demand; it is there when it is there.

Higher-cost transmission lines must be built to carry peak load and much of that capacity will be unused. Variable and unpredictable power output means that conventional power plants must be up and running resulting in costs and concomitant carbon dioxide emissions, no matter how hard political or other winds blow.

Intermittency of wind-power supply presents serious load-balancing challenges to massive electrical grid networks and reduces their stability. The whole point of

a modern energy grid is on-demand power at the flip of a switch.

There are concerns that the presence of a wind farm may cause a decline in the value of surrounding properties and desirability for nearby land, resulting in diminished tax revenues. Some concerns seem unfounded. Noise pollution and bizarre ill effects from sonic emissions are wildly exaggerated.

Also, despite thousands of wind farms, documented adverse impact on bird and bat populations are the exception with Altamont Pass in California, Tarifa Spain and two West Virginia sites withstanding.

The energy crisis is not solved by inflating tires or inflated rhetoric and wind power will and should have a role. Our leadership is what needs to be energized and those leaders must intelligently address both sides of the supply and demand equation. The answer is not about seeking total energy independence.

Item 1: Cease the present abomination of soul and sovereignty sucking dependence on foreign oil. The answer is not blowing in the wind.

Wind energy is produced by atmospheric convection forces influenced by the sun. Considering that, if we could couple messianic saint-in-waiting Al Gore to Michael Moore in front of a massive turbine and they do what blowhards do best then perhaps . . .

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