

Texas Comptroller Glenn Hegar writes that Biden's energy policy could lead to shortages, price spikes

Renewable-only policy undermines climate goals.

This op-ed is part of a series published by The Dallas Morning News Opinion section to explore ideas and policies for strengthening electric reliability.

Find the full series here: [Keeping the Lights On.](#)

But the global energy crunch is making clear what Texas has long recognized: While renewable energy can be an important part of the broad mix of sources needed to meet the demand of consumers and businesses, renewable energy cannot meet that demand on its own. President Joe Biden's refusal to accept this fact will only make shortages worse and raise prices without making real progress on the climate issues we all care about.

Even some members of the president's own party are pushing back on his expensive climate agenda, and with good reason. For a clean energy proposal to work, it must guarantee that energy is available and reliable while ensuring individuals and businesses can afford to keep the power on.

The scope of the energy problem is coming into focus around the world as the very welcome comeback of the pandemic-battered economy is meeting the reality of the shortage in energy supplies. India is facing power shortages because coal is scarce; China is increasing coal production to try to address its power needs; and natural gas prices are skyrocketing in Europe and East Asia. The possibility of a brutal winter is heightening concerns.

In the United States, natural gas prices already are the highest they've been in 13 years, and oil prices are more than \$80 a barrel for the first time in seven years. Inflation is likely to continue as long as this presidential administration dissuades continued exploration, forcing the oil and gas industry and states to go to court to challenge decisions on lease auctions, greenhouse gases and the Keystone XL Pipeline.

Limiting the potential supply of oil and gas raises energy costs, which are a component of most broad inflation measures. High oil and gas prices also can lead to higher costs for other products because of increased transportation and manufacturing expenses.

We can't afford to ignore the importance of our traditional sources of energy as we develop renewable energy sources. About 60% of the nation's electricity generation came from fossil fuels in 2020, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, with 20% coming from nuclear energy and 20% from renewable energy resources. That's a big gap to bridge, and it's a global one as well. *The Wall Street Journal* reported that even though investment in fossil fuels has declined, they still provide the bulk of the world's energy; spending on green energy simply isn't enough to make up the difference.

Renewable energy deserves attention and investment, but the U.S. -- and the world -- can't stop and wait for it to mature enough as an industry to supply everyone's needs. A more measured approach is the only practical way to keep our economy moving while addressing the environment.

Electric cars are becoming increasingly viable and attractive -- even in states like Texas, where we must rely on our vehicles for long-distance driving in addition to short commutes. But there still are major concerns to address before electric cars can take the place of traditional vehicles, including drivers' lingering worries of being stranded miles away from a charging station, the expense of battery replacement and the cost of home-charging stations. Electric vehicles are unable to meet every need; as explained by the Brookings Institution, gasoline and diesel provide much more energy for their weight than do batteries, and this is important in commercial areas including trucking.

Even if we all drove electric cars, that would not eliminate the need for natural gas and oil to help power them. Wind and solar cannot and will not be able to create all the electricity needed to charge these cars. When electric cars are built, many of their components are created in part by oil byproducts. And in some parts of the world, mining minerals to power the lithium-ion cells that

run electric vehicles is less environmentally friendly than oil and gas exploration, though the quantities are smaller.

When it comes to powering our homes and offices, Steve Forbes pointed out that 75,000 homes can rely on one 100-megawatt natural gas fired turbine for their electricity needs – but it would take at least 20 wind turbines the size of the Washington Monument to produce a similar amount of electricity. Building these wind turbines, Forbes noted, would take 900 tons of nonrecyclable plastics, 30,000 tons of iron ore and 50,000 tons of concrete.

As the father of three children, I consider nothing more important than ensuring that my kids inherit a healthy world that offers them and every other child the opportunity for a healthy and productive life. And having grown up in a farming family, I know it is critical to protect the outdoors and our environment. Yet assuming that we can make a complete transition to an all-electrical world without the use of fossil fuels is impractical, illogical and impossible.

Our country will benefit if it follows Texas' lead and treats energy producers as our economic partners, not our enemies. Encouraging companies to meet emission-reduction goals makes more sense than punishing them for not being able to change on a dime.

We can't just flip a switch to make this administration's energy wishes come true. We must work together to advance timely, practical solutions that develop renewable energy while acknowledging the continued importance of a diversified energy portfolio. Our economic health and well-being depend on it.

Glenn Hegar is the Texas comptroller. He wrote this column for The Dallas Morning News.