

The Facts Behind Secretary Rick Perry's Renewable Energy Review

The Southern Environmental Law Center

- **THE AUTHORS OF PERRY'S REVIEW HAVE A CONFLICT OF INTEREST:** The Department of Energy staffers charged with conducting this analysis have a track record of bias against renewable energy.
 - Perry's Chief of Staff Brian McCormack most recently worked at Edison Electric Institute (EEI), where he coordinated efforts to impose fees and roll back compensation for rooftop solar owners.
 - Travis Fisher, a political appointee at DOE, previously worked for the Koch Brothers-funded Institute for Energy Research and American Energy Alliance where he made [comments](#) lamenting tax credits for wind and solar.
 - Daniel Simmons, who has been tapped to lead DOE's EERE program, has claimed higher levels of wind and solar power could raise domestic prices.
- **RENEWABLES ARE THE ECONOMIC AND SAFE CHOICE:** Rick Perry's memo fails to understand the economics in play.
 - Solar energy powers jobs across the South. More than 3 million U.S. jobs are in solar and wind power, energy efficiency, energy storage, and [advanced grid technologies](#), and [one out of every 50 new jobs](#) added in the United States in 2016 was created by the solar industry. Across the Southeast, [solar jobs are growing](#) – with over 20,000 jobs in Virginia, Tennessee, Georgia, the Carolinas and Alabama.
 - The market power of traditional fossil fuels is falling for unrelated reasons. Perry's memo implies that baseload resources are being threatened by policies that support clean energy but fails to recognize that low natural gas prices (2016 had the lowest prices in 20 years) have made coal and nuclear plants uneconomic.
 - Tax credits for renewable energy pale in comparison to fossil fuel subsidies. Since 1947, [86 percent of all energy subsidies](#) have gone to fossil sources and nuclear power.
- **RENEWABLES STRENGTHEN NATIONAL SECURITY:**
 - The U.S. military plans for [25 percent of the military's energy production](#) to come from renewables by 2025 and bases in [Georgia, Alabama](#), and [North Carolina](#) have all gone solar.
 - Diversity of energy resources [can reduce the impact of cyber-attacks](#), physical attacks and natural disasters.
 - According to [CIA Director James Woolsey](#) a more decentralized grid enhances national security because it prevents a single grid failure "from cascading into a catastrophe."
- **RENEWABLE ENERGY HAS BIPARTISAN SUPPORT:** Republican state officials have long championed their states' clean energy investments. Some examples include:
 - Senator Grassley (R-Iowa) raised concerns that Perry's study was being "hastily developed" and "will not be viewed as credible, relevant or worthy of valuable taxpayer resources" while pointing out that Iowa gets more than 36 percent of its power from reliable and affordable wind energy.
 - UN Ambassador Nikki Haley praised a landmark 2015 bill that opened up South Carolina to more solar power.
 - Georgia State Rep. Mike Dudgeon (R) sponsored a bill in 2015 to allow Georgians to access third-party solar financing. Georgia customers are saving several hundreds of millions of dollars in electricity costs because of the state's investments in rural solar farms, under the leadership of the all-Republican Public Service Commission.¹
- **RESEARCH SHOWS THE U.S. HAS MORE CAPACITY FOR RENEWABLES:**
 - A two-year analysis from [the DOE's National Renewable Energy Lab](#) (NREL) found renewable energy can reliably meet up to 80 percent of U.S. electric demand in 2050 with modest improvements to the flexibility of the grid.
 - An [independent study by GE](#) found that the PJM system can operate with up to 30 percent of its energy provided by wind and solar power. No insurmountable operating issues were found during the study, and every scenario resulted in lower energy prices.
 - A [utility-commissioned report](#) conducted by DOE's Pacific Northwest National Lab (PNNL) in 2014 found that Duke Energy's Carolinas system could accommodate solar up to 20 percent of peak load, and would see a decrease in its total system production costs.

¹ Georgia Power Company's Application for Certification of the 2015 and 2016 Advanced Solar Initiative Prime Power Purchase Agreements and Request for Approval of the 2015 Advanced Solar Initiative Power Purchase Agreements, Georgia Public Service Commission Docket No. 38877, Hearing Transcript (Dec. 2, 2014), at 50.