

The Ugly Underbelly of Senate Bill S.2657

This is a simplified tale of how good intentions were cleverly hijacked by self-serving special-interest parties – with little publicity, and to the detriment of the public, the environment, our economy, and our national security.

When Senator Murkowski initially proposed an energy bill ([S.2657](#)), it was strictly about geothermal. The title was: *Advanced Geothermal Innovation Leadership Act of 2019*.

Some of the main reasons that this good legislation had this narrow focus were because [deep-drilling geothermal](#) (what the bill refers to as *enhanced* or *advanced*):

- 1) is a reliable, non-intermittent electrical energy source,
- 2) is projected to be genuinely cost competitive with conventional electrical energy sources (e.g. see this [MIT study](#)),
- 3) is our energy future (e.g. the initial bill [stated](#) that: “The Department of Energy has determined that geothermal could represent a large part of the U.S. energy mix by 2050, rivaling the growth of solar, wind, and hydraulic fracturing”), and
- 4) there is no currently financially successful deep-drilling geothermal business, so R&D is necessary to get this beneficial energy source going.

These are solid reasons, but legislation doesn't get passed because it makes sense(!). Instead there needs to be *political* reasons to pass a bill – e.g. large stakeholders who will benefit from such legislation, *and* who make it a priority to their representatives.

As there is no strong geothermal lobby in DC, the bill languished, and was presumed to be deceased. However, devious renewable energy proponents apparently said: “why don't we piggyback wind and solar onto this bill, so that we can get even more than the [\\$100+ Billion](#) of federal handouts (e.g. PTC) that we've already pocketed.” (FYI, this is probably the first measure promoted by this [new lobbying behemoth](#).)

As a result, in March of 2020 – while most of us were dealing with COVID-19, etc. – they stuck wind and solar into S.2657. They not only awarded themselves the proposed geothermal benefits, but (since few were watching) they added many more. (See some details in the [Congressional Record](#): search over *wind* as well as *solar*.)

Of course the wind and solar lobbyists' argument is just what you heard in kindergarten: *if geothermal gets handouts, why not them?* Well let's look at the original *reasons* for geothermal, and see if wind and solar are actually equivalent:

- 1) wind and solar are [unreliable, intermittent](#) electrical energy sources,
- 2) after decades of preferential treatment, wind and solar are **not** genuinely cost competitive with conventional electrical energy sources (e.g. see this [study](#)),
- 3) our energy future is [SMRs](#) and **geothermal**, not wind and solar, *and*
- 4) wind and solar are **very successful businesses** (e.g. [here](#)) – and supposedly mature – so no taxpayer funded R&D is appropriate.

In other words, wind and solar are the **diametric opposites** of geothermal, so there are **zero legitimate reasons** for them to be included in S.2657.

Regretfully, it's worse than this. Wind and solar lobbyists have become so confident that they can easily manipulate state and federal legislators, that they decided to include major provisions *beyond* what were in the original geothermal bill!

For example, in addition to \$600 Million in new US taxpayer handouts for wind, and \$1.3 Billion for solar, this S.2657 amendment **requires** that:

“Renewable Energy Goal — The Secretary and the Secretary of Agriculture, through management of public land and administration of Federal laws, shall seek to issue permits that, in total, authorize production of no less than **25 Gigawatts** of electricity from wind, solar, and geothermal energy projects no later than December 31, 2025.”

There was no **mandate** in the initial geothermal bill, much less this HUGE amount. (BTW, these shysters cleverly added geothermal into this requirement, knowing full well that no consequential amount of geothermal will likely be available by 2025, so this is strictly a **national wind and solar mandate** — *the first ever!*)

These are some considerations that wind and solar lobbyists don't want citizens and legislators to factor in:

- 1 - When ALL their expenses are properly calculated and fully attributed (e.g. transmission, auxiliary support, etc., etc.), wind and solar are four to five times the cost of conventional electrical energy sources;
- 2 - Industrial wind energy can cause substantial environmental and eco-system liabilities;
- 3 - Solar panels can have toxic chemicals and carcinogenic materials (like PFAS) that can get into local aquifers, which can have *very* problematic health effects,
- 4 - Wind energy can produce more CO2 than gas by itself, so if CO2 savings are paramount, combined-cycle gas is a better choice (and is *less expensive*);
- 5 - It is well-documented that industrial wind turbines have caused a wide variety of problems to our military and national security;
- 6 - There are dozens of studies by independent experts that have concluded that wind turbines can cause severe health consequences to nearby citizens;
- 7 - Although wind is sold as a local financial boon to host communities, the reality is that a wind project can have a net negative economic impact on the community;
- 8 - the decommissioning and disposal of wind and solar panel waste will become an enormous environmental problem in the near future.

Once these realities are fully comprehended, the obvious question is: *why should the US taxpayer pay more to enrich these inferior, expensive, unreliable sources of electrical energy?*

As of this writing, Senator Murkowski (R) and Senator Manchin (D) are negotiating through [220+amendments](#). That number alone should make it very clear that there is a frenetic frenzied feeding of special-interests at the public trough as the word gets out.

Yes, there is some good buried in this morass, but why does every such major measure turn out to be a Faustian bargain? The idea that for the public to get some benefits, that we must also except multiple serious liabilities, is simply insane.

S.2657 (and the 900± page [H.R. 4447](#) House counterpart [passed](#) on 9-24-20!) will likely be the most problematic, far-reaching national energy legislation in decades – so we need to be aware of *and* publicly analyze every handout and concession made in what will likely turn out to be a 500+ page omnibus energy bill.

Along that line, please read this expert [commentary](#) on S.2657 – from a *different* perspective than I've written about here.

Since the Senate is immersed in the Supreme Court issue, there will be a strong inclination to want to clear the deck of pending legislation (like S.2657). Further, since Senator Murkowski is a swing vote on the Supreme Court matter, it is conceivable that Leader McConnell (ordinarily sensible about energy matters), will agree to look the other way while S.2657 passes, in exchange for Murkowski's Supreme Court vote.

What to do? PLEASE [contact](#) your federal Senator TODAY. Send them this, and politely tell them to keep the geothermal parts of S.2657, but to extract any and all references to wind or solar, as well as all [anti-fossil fuel](#) and anti-Science measures.

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