

Battery Fantasy

One hundred percent renewable electricity! It's going to happen... and soon, right? That's what we are being told by people like AOC and a growing number of other politicians. But the truth is, these attention-seeking officeholders have no idea what they are talking about, and they are counting on you not asking for a little extra detail.

What kind of detail? How about this one? What do we do when the wind isn't blowing? And how do we keep the lights on during cloudy days or at night when there is no solar power? You see, wind and solar only produce electricity 25 to 30 percent of the time, and sometimes not at all. No biggie, we'll just build lots of giant batteries like the ones Tesla is building. That will take care of it. No. It won't. Unfortunately, that little detail isn't so little... or even doable.

Mark Mills, Senior Fellow at the Manhattan Institute, explained the battery problem extremely well in his report, *The New Energy Economy: An Exercise in Magical Thinking*. For example, it costs less than one dollar a barrel to store oil or natural gas for a couple of months. Storing the same quantity of energy in a grid-scale battery costs \$200. The Tesla batteries needed to store that barrel of oil energy equivalent would cost \$200,000 and weigh more than 20,000 pounds. In contrast, a barrel of oil weighs 300 pounds and can be stored in a \$20 tank.

Tesla spent five billion dollars building the world's largest battery manufacturing plant in Nevada and its called a Gigafactory. According to Mills, the entire annual output of this Tesla plant could store a whopping three minutes worth of U.S. electricity demand.

And since we're talking about magical thinking, let's imagine we actually could mine enough resource materials to keep that Gigafactory cranking out batteries for 1,000 years. With all that battery power we could keep today's U.S. electricity demand working for a total of... two days.

Shocking, isn't it? But isn't that the way things always are when politicians get involved. Costs are hidden, realities are ignored, and all sorts of accomplishments can be achieved if only we are aspirational enough.

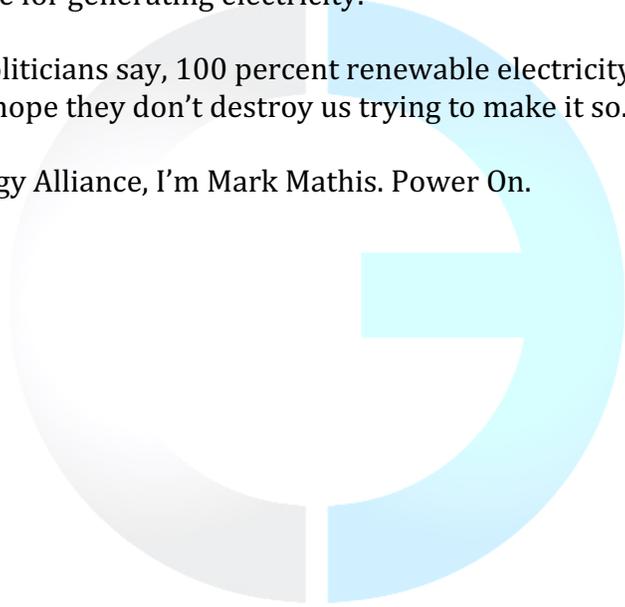
Here's another reality you haven't heard about. Because electric utilities have been mandated to add wind and solar in unrealistic quantities, costly adjustments have had to be made. In order to keep the grid reliable, utilities have installed more than \$4 billion worth of giant engine generators. Most of them burn natural gas, but a lot of them are oil-fired. Three times as many natural gas and oil generators have been added to the nation's grid in the past twenty years than in the previous half-century.

That's one of those costs that somehow doesn't get attributed to the wind and solar balance sheet.

Mills said it best when he wrote, "The issue with wind and solar power comes down to a simple point: their usefulness is impractical on a national scale as a major or primary fuel source for generating electricity."

No matter what politicians say, 100 percent renewable electricity isn't going to happen. Let's just hope they don't destroy us trying to make it so.

For the Clear Energy Alliance, I'm Mark Mathis. Power On.



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