

CA Scapegoating

California is a dreamy state that for many has become a nightmare. Giant, deadly wildfires are a consistent problem and so are planned blackouts. Who's to blame for the Golden State's charred image. Well... if you are looking for a scapegoat, there are quite a few to choose from.

It pains me to see what's happened in California. I used to live there. It's one of the most beautiful places on the planet. But decades of politicians embracing fanciful ideas while ignoring energy reality has put the state in a dangerous and expensive hole that will be a great challenge to escape.

As everyone in California knows, PG&E provides the vast majority of the state's electricity. The utility was forced into bankruptcy following the devastating wildfires in 2018. PG&E is an easy scapegoat for Governor Gavin Newsom. He blames the company's greed and corruption. PG&E is responsible for some of the wildfires sparked by transmission lines, but there are many other goats that have contributed to the state's precarious situation.

For a century the U.S. Forest Service and state fire agencies stomped out every fire that ignited. That left our forests filled with fuel for giant, deadly fires. PG&E should have spent a lot more money clearing trees and other debris from powerlines as well as updating equipment, but it didn't make that a high priority. So, there's two scapegoats—PG&E and bad forest management practices. But there are many more goats in this story.

The state could be spending billions of dollars upgrading transmission lines, but that money is going elsewhere. \$7.5 billion from the state's cap and trade tax goes to something called "ratepayer benefits," but in reality it mostly just hides the true cost of renewables. \$2.2 billion is spent on rebates for rooftop solar over 9 years. Since 2015 \$100 million a year has gone to solar systems in low income areas.

In 2018 the state spent \$150 million on battery storage. And it's spending \$130 million over three years to install 7,500 electric car charging stations. And let's not forget the mountains of cash spent on anything else that signals virtuous concern about climate change.

So, let's add state leaders with confused priorities as another goat to blame. By the way, you would think all the money not being spent on keeping California's grid safe would at least keep California electricity prices under control, but that's not the case. Californians pay twice as much for electricity as people in Oregon and Washington.

I could go on and on about misspent money, priority problems, bad decisions, neglect, political corruption, and gross incompetence. We'd have a giant herd of goats—some that are bad actors and some that are partially to blame and partially victims. But ultimately the blame lies mostly with a goat that rarely gets mentioned... the people of California.

Californians, wake up! Your state is being terribly mismanaged, and you are the ones who are electing people who are more concerned about virtue signaling than meeting the basic needs of the people, most notably providing a safe and reliable electric grid. It's bad... So bad, that many people have stopped blaming the goats. Instead, they've moved to Arizona, Nevada, Texas and elsewhere. California... energy reality is knocking. Isn't it time to open the door?

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



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