



RAILROAD COMMISSION OF TEXAS

Commissioner WAYNE CHRISTIAN

August 15, 2023

The Honorable Greg Abbott
Governor
State of Texas
1100 San Jacinto Blvd.
Austin, Texas 78701

The Honorable Dawn Buckingham
Commissioner
Texas General Land Office
1700 N. Congress Ave.
Austin, Texas 78701

Re: Opposition to Biden Administration's Offshore Wind Farms in the Gulf of Mexico

Governor Abbott and Commissioner Buckingham:

I write to inform you of my concern regarding the Biden Administration's implementation of offshore wind farms near our Texas Gulf Coast. These wind farms are an environmental risk, a public safety hazard, a burden on our electric grid, and a taxpayer boondoggle that jeopardizes local jobs, industries, and economies along the Gulf of Mexico.

In July, the Biden Administration's U.S. Department of Interior announced plans to auction approximately 200,000 acres of federal water near the Galveston coast for construction and operation of offshore windmills. While these wind farms will be in federal waters, the consequences of their installation will be far reaching and impact the state and our local communities.

As Railroad Commissioner, I am concerned about the continued growth of taxpayer-subsidized energy displacing reliable fossil fuels in our state and nation. President Biden declared war on fossil fuels, and he has been winning nearly every battle since, with biggest climate bill in history¹ and an unrelenting barrage of bureaucratic rules from his agencies. From trying to shut down the Permian Basin with non-attainment and the Endangered Species Act to creating

¹ <https://www.wsj.com/articles/inflation-reduction-act-subsidies-cost-goldman-sachs-report-5623cd29>

onerous regulations on production, the Biden Administration will not rest until they have ended Texas oil and gas.

Texas is a natural gas state, with our industry producing a quarter of the nation's gas. If our state were its own nation, we would be the world's third largest producer of natural gas². It is our economic lifeblood and a part of the very fabric of our state. Moreover, its production directly contributes hundreds of billions of dollars to the state's budget and 'Rainy Day' fund. As policymakers, we should be encouraging our electricity producers to utilize the cheapest, most reliable and abundant source of electricity we have—natural gas.

President Biden and Washington Democrats are trying to bait-n-switch Americans on fossil fuels with their government-backed unreliable energy sources (wind/solar). The media frequently claims wind and solar power make electricity less expensive for consumers and ratepayers, but they often fail to mention that those same Texans have paid over \$90 billion³ and rising in taxes and fees to subsidize these unreliable sources of energy.

As a result of those subsidies, wind and solar energy are projected to surpass natural gas as an energy source this year on the Texas electric grid. In fact, electric generation from natural gas grew by about 3% in the last five years, while wind increased by 46% and solar even more⁴. Federally subsidized offshore wind is about three times more expensive than onshore⁵ and will compound the issues our grid has experienced because of the growing reliance on unreliable energy sources.

I want to commend the legislature for the electricity reforms made during the 88th session, which will encourage more natural gas electric generation on our grid. However, as the Biden Administration implements its Green New Deal agenda through the *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act* and the *Inflation Reduction Act*, Texas can expect billions of taxpayer dollars to flood the state incentivizing wind and solar energy—offshore wind included.

Offshore wind farms have a host of policy and safety concerns that must be considered. Implementation off the Atlantic coast has offered a case study to those concerns that include whale and bird deaths, impact on local fisheries, increased radar interference, navigable waters for ships, adequate environmental impact studies, national defense issues, foreign direct investment, and much more. The Atlantic offshore wind farms have presented so many issues to local communities that 50 mayors have petitioned for a moratorium⁶ and there's pending lawsuit to stop them⁷.

² <https://businessintexas.com/ceo-blog/texas-energy-sector-goes-beyond-oil-and-gas/>

³ https://www.realclearenergy.org/articles/2021/06/17/why_was_66_billion_spent_on_renewables_before_the_texas_blackouts_because_big_wind_and_big_solar_got_22_billion_in_subsidies_781862.html#:~:text=Thus%20for%20every%20dollar%20spent,not%20translating%20into%20reliable%20electricity.

⁴ <https://www.dallasnews.com/business/energy/2023/03/24/renewable-energy-saves-money-creates-jobs-and-cuts-emissions-why-is-texas-targeting-it/>

⁵ https://www.eia.gov/outlooks/aeo/assumptions/pdf/table_8.2.pdf

⁶ <https://www.foxbusiness.com/energy/fishermen-activists-protesting-offshore-wind-projects-east-coast-manmade-environmental-disaster>

⁷ <https://www.houstonchronicle.com/business/article/offshore-wind-lawsuit-texas-conservatives-17883174.php>

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The issues presented on the Atlantic coast will certainly present similar problems for Gulf of Mexico. Many Texans and gulf coast communities rely on the gulf for their livelihoods whether it's commercial fishing, tourism, industrial or transportation jobs. For example, the fishing industry in the gulf is worth about \$900 billion a year⁸, while the Port of Houston is also worth about \$900 billion annually⁹. There is no doubt that these wind farms, their installation, and the electricity they produce will have an impact on sea life, commercial fishing, radar interference, shipping lanes, and more.

If you or your teams are interested in learning more about the challenges with wind farms along the Atlantic Coast, I recommend listening to my podcast episode with Megan Lapp, fisheries liaison for the lawsuit. It is a deep dive into the problems they are presently facing with installed wind farms and demonstrates what could be instore for the Gulf of Mexico. You can find it here: <https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/wayne-christian/episodes/14---Meghan-Lapp-Seafreeze-Ltd-e27ivk7/a-aa6fmbb>

Something must be done to stop President Biden from implementing these wind farms in the Gulf of Mexico. In the 88th session, Senator Mayes Middleton authored Senate Bill 1303 (SB 1303) that would allow the Texas General Land Office the ability to deny a permit for any offshore wind farm. While the windmills will be in federal waters, the transmission lines and support infrastructure will be on Texas property. If this bill were to become law, it would be a valuable tool toward blocking these wind farms.

Governor Abbott, it is my hope that this issue is on your radar. I know you are committed to protecting Texas from the Biden Administration's radical agenda, including his Green New Deal policies. These offshore windfarms are part of that agenda, and I have no doubt his administration will do everything in their power to see them come online. If there is any authority vested in your office to block these wind farms, I would respectfully urge you to act on behalf of all Texans. Should there be an additional special session call, I would recommend adding this issue to the list and working with Senator Middleton to get SB 1303 passed and signed into law.

Commissioner Buckingham, I know you have signaled your opposition to these offshore wind farms and support Senator Middleton's efforts. If there is any authority vested in your office to block these windfarms, I would also respectfully encourage you to act on behalf of all Texans.

You are both strong supporters of Texas oil and gas and know what's at stake. Texas is the top crude oil- and natural gas-producing state in the nation, representing 43% of oil production and 27% of natural gas production¹⁰. The industry roughly makes up 1/3 of our state's economy¹¹ and has contributed \$203 billion in taxes and royalties since 2007¹², directly benefiting our state-funded programs. Texas oil and gas makes our state the best place to live, work, and raise a family—and it needs to be defended.

⁸ <http://extension.msstate.edu/news/extension-outdoors/2021/fisheries-are-vital-coastal-economy>

⁹ <https://www.houston.org/news/study-houston-ship-channel-contributed-more-900-billion-us-economy>

¹⁰ <https://www.eia.gov/state/?sid=TX>

¹¹ <https://www.txoga.org/texas-oil-and-natural-gas-legislative-district-vital-statistics/>

¹² <https://www.txoga.org/our-industry/economic-benefits/>

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I deeply appreciate your attention to this matter that's important to the Lone Star State. If there is anything my office can do to be of assistance, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Thank you both for your dedicated service to Texans and our great state.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Wayne Christian", with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Wayne Christian
Commissioner
Railroad Commission of Texas

- C: The Honorable Dan Partick
- The Honorable Dade Phelan
- The Honorable Mayes Middleton
- The Honorable Drew Springer
- The Honorable Brian Birdwell
- The Honorable Charles Schwertner
- The Honorable Craig Goldman
- The Honorable Tracy King
- The Honorable Terri Leo Wilson