



## Time for Solar to Push Back

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Solar now enjoys a powerhouse set of assets that many industries spend dearly to acquire: explosive growth, wide and deep public support, and a base of authentic citizen advocates – many of whom aren't in the industry but see it as a key part of America's future.

Those assets have converted solar from a nice curiosity to a real long-term threat to the fossil fuel industries.

The coal and oil companies see that, and they are acting accordingly. Solar isn't responding at nearly the level needed.

Roughly five years ago, the dirty energy lobby geared up to stop Congressional climate change legislation. The American Petroleum Institute announced that it was going to spend roughly \$100 million a year on a "repositioning" campaign, and the coal industry did the same at about half that level.

That meant hiring dozens of lobbyists, front groups and public relations firms to move propaganda and cut into solar's overall market position. You can see signs of this in the escalating, concerted attack on solar's market position that's being conducted through:

- Well-tested messaging about solar's reliability, cost and readiness
- Disciplined, repeated message delivery through multiple media channels
- Extensive use of "experts" and front groups to form an echo chamber

Don't take my word for it. My [firm](#) tracked anti-solar rhetoric on the editorial and opinion pages of the Washington Times, which has attacked solar 17 times in the past seven months.

This type of rhetoric was also on full display in three Wall Street Journal editorials (which you can read [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)) in a 55-day span. The themes are pushed even further by a recent quote from the Institute for Energy Research in this [Bloomberg News story](#); an [entire anti-renewables book](#) by the Manhattan Institute's Robert Bryce; and the [e-book from the Cato Institute](#) that equated scaling the clean economy with government waste.

How can solar and other renewables possibly push back against the fossil fuel industries, which have so many more resources to commit to the fight? We released a [poll](#) today that suggests an answer, **particularly on the cost argument**.

Our poll not only confirmed that solar's support is wide and deep, but showed that 80 percent of Americans don't know how much of their taxes are given each year to highly profitable corporations in the coal and oil industries.

When people learned that \$10 billion of their money is given to the guys claiming they are “cheap” energy, just 8 percent wanted things to stay that way. In fact, over 70 percent said they wanted half or all of that money repurposed to promoting solar and other renewables.

One poll isn't going to stop the fossil industries' attacks, but it tells us that we shouldn't shy from the debate on costs – we should see it as a strength.

*We're* the cheap and abundant (in fact, infinite) energy source, not the fossils. If the fossil fuel defenders want to talk about how cheap they are, then they need to tell Americans why they depend on so much government welfare. If they want to say that solar's policy support is somehow a sign of our adolescence, then we need to point out – repeatedly and aggressively – that 150 years of subsidies makes fossil fuels the oldest toddlers in America.

And, we should push policymakers to do what consumers and taxpayers want by overwhelming majorities – cut fossil fuel subsidies and replace them with expanded policy support for renewable energy sources.

I can't tell you the number of times I've heard over the last several years: “We're solar, everyone loves us.” That's true, but it won't stay true unless we make our case far more forcefully, aggressively and frequently. Industry players need to step up their advocacy game considerably, both individually and through greater participation in the [Solar Energy Industries Association](#).

Despite our strong, shared interest, solar is still depending far too much on goodwill to get by.

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