

# Oppose the future.

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## DISMANTLING THE CATO INSTITUTE'S ATTACK ON GREEN JOBS

In a column posted to the Forbes website last evening, Cato Institute senior fellows Jerry Taylor and Peter Van Doren attack what they call "the green jobs myth."



Oppose the Future

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Coming from perhaps the nation's foremost libertarian advocacy organization, it's not a surprising piece. But the authors' arguments suffer from some critical flaws - and the organization's history and financial supporters should give any reader pause.

## THE ARGUMENTS

Over the course of nine hundred words, the pair contrast what they refer to as

“brown energy” - that derived from fossil fuels - with green energy systems.

Their points run as follows:

Obama claims that millions of jobs will be created in the green economy - but green energy is less labor-intensive than brown energy. Even if it were more labor-intensive,

that  
would be  
a reason  
*against*  
transitioning  
to green  
energy  
because,  
essentially,  
labor  
intensity  
can be  
difficult  
to scale.  
Green  
energy  
costs  
more.  
Spain  
found  
that  
green  
energy  
cost  
more  
jobs in  
the  
brown  
energy  
sector  
than  
were  
created  
in green.  
The  
government  
miscalculates  
green

jobs  
created.  
There is  
a real  
innovation  
at hand -  
hydraulic  
fracturing  
("fracking")  
to  
increase  
natural  
gas  
supplies.

Notice what  
goes  
unaddressed:  
the negative  
externalities  
associated  
with fossil  
fuel-based  
energy  
production,  
including the  
impact of  
burning  
fossil fuels  
on the  
climate and  
the health  
impacts from  
coal-burning  
power  
plants. To

the authors,  
these  
factors are  
incidental to  
the  
economics  
of the issue.

## A REBUTTAL

But even on  
the  
economics,  
their  
arguments  
fall flat.

### **Labor- intensity.**

Well, first of  
all - you  
can't have it  
both ways.  
Either it's  
good that  
"brown"  
energy puts  
more people  
to work, or  
it's good  
that  
renewables  
do. Sure, it  
wouldn't be

ideal if we transitioned from fossil fuels to green energy, and that required 10,000 wind miners per kilowatt-hour.

But the numbers are nothing like that.

And the numbers are clear: renewable energy systems do provide more jobs.

Here's [a chart from Energy Revolution](#) which compares job numbers per megawatt-hour.

table 2.5: summary of employment factors for 1

FUEL	CONSTRUCTION, MANUFACTURING & INSTALLATION <i>Person years/MW</i>
Coal	14.4
Gas	3.4
Nuclear	16
Biomass	4.3
Hydro	11.3
Wind (onshore)	15.4
Wind (offshore)	28.8
PV	38.4
Geothermal	6.4
Solar thermal	10
Ocean	10
Energy efficiency	0.29 jobs /GWh (adjusted to 0.23 job

In an on-going basis, solar, geothermal and wind all provide more jobs than coal or gas. (Green For All has [a report with similar findings](#).) And with unemployment still plaguing America, it's hard to argue that those jobs aren't beneficial.

**Green energy costs more.**



As has been documented at the Green Jobs Index, the price points of fossil fuel-generated power and renewable power are converging. According to the chief executive of Bloomberg New Energy Finance, new wind installations are now cheaper than new coal facilities. And Secretary of Energy Chu recently indicated that he saw the cost per kilowatt-hour for

renewable  
sources  
being  
competitive  
across the  
board by  
the end of  
the decade .

It seems to  
go without  
saying that  
we shouldn't  
make energy  
decisions  
that will last  
decades  
while  
ignoring  
projections  
looking a  
few years  
out.

**Spain study  
on green  
jobs.** The  
study  
referred to  
by the Cato  
experts has  
been  
debunked,  
including by  
analysts at

the National  
Renewable  
Energy  
Laboratory .

**Government  
miscounting  
green**

**jobs**. "Green jobs" is a term still being defined. But, no matter how the government counts the jobs, there's no question that the clean energy jobs are growing steadily. Solar was the fastest-growing sector of the economy in 2010, and just this week the former Governor of

Michigan  
credited  
clean  
energy with  
turning  
around the  
economic  
fortunes of  
that  
battered  
state.

Whether or  
not the  
government  
counts the  
jobs it  
should (and  
the jury is  
out on that)  
- there's no  
question  
that jobs in  
clean  
energy are  
being  
created at a  
rapid clip.

**Fracking is  
an  
important  
innovation.** While  
fracking is  
certainly

appealing to  
the natural  
gas  
companies  
looking for  
new sources  
for their  
core  
product, it's  
also deeply  
damaging  
to the  
environment,  
as reported  
by the *New*  
*York Times,*  
and may  
actually be  
worse for  
the climate  
than coal.  
While the  
good fellows  
from Cato  
aren't  
concerned  
about  
man-made  
earthquakes,  
the people  
in impacted  
communities  
don't have  
that luxury.

## WHY LISTEN TO THE CATO INSTITUTE?

As mentioned at the outset, this attack, flawed though it is, isn't a surprise coming from the Cato Institute. What is a surprise is that anyone would heed it.

After all, the Cato Institute has, in the past twenty years, taken over \$13 million in funding from foundations

associated  
with the  
Koch family,  
and over  
\$100,000  
from  
ExxonMobil.

What's  
more, the  
Institute has  
a history of  
defending  
indefensible  
corporate  
actors who  
sponsor  
them.

In fact, in  
1998 one of  
the  
co-authors  
of  
yesterday's  
essay,  
Peter Van  
Doren,  
penned a  
universally  
criticized  
attack on  
increasing  
tobacco  
taxes . In it,

he wrote:

**[T]he  
effort  
is  
cloaked  
in the  
abolitionist  
rhetoric  
of the  
anti-smoking  
lobby....**

**But  
smokers  
do not  
live as  
long  
as  
non-smokers  
and,  
thus,  
smokers  
create  
savings  
for  
taxpayers  
that  
usually  
aren't  
considered.  
Because**



**smokers  
die  
earlier  
than  
non-smokers  
taxpayers  
save  
expenditures  
that  
otherwise  
would  
be  
made  
for  
pensions  
as well  
as  
nursing  
home  
care  
and  
other  
costs  
related  
to  
conditions  
associated  
with  
old  
age.**

Got that?

The argument that cigarettes should be taxed to offset the increased healthcare costs of smokers ignores the fact that cigarettes kill the smokers before that added cost becomes a problem.

All of this can be seen as the tobacco industry's last-ditch effort to influence policy-makers against increasing the cost of their

product. As recently as 2006, R. J. Reynolds and Philip Morris' parent company, Altria, gave to the Cato Institute to continue to advocate on their behalf.

## OPPOSING THE FUTURE

While it wasn't as easy as doing a find-and-replace for "cigarettes" and "coal" (after glancing at who was writing the check), the 1998 defense of

tobacco and  
yesterday's  
attack on  
green jobs  
should be  
understood  
as the same  
genre of  
tactic.

Just as R.  
J. Reynolds  
and Philip  
Morris  
sought to  
stem  
criticism  
while they  
tried to  
continue  
their past  
business  
practices,  
so-called  
"brown  
energy"  
companies  
are still  
trying to  
wring a last  
few dollars  
out of the  
1900s.

I don't doubt

that the authors of yesterday's essay believe the arguments they make. That doesn't make the arguments sound - and it doesn't make them immune to having to reveal their association with those who the arguments enrich.

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INSTITUTE  
GREEN  
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KOCH  
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