

COMMENTARY

Missouri becoming hotbed for solar energy initiatives

With more than 8,000 companies now operating nationwide, solar energy has become one of the fastest-growing industries in America - thanks, in large part, to remarkable growth on both the West and East coasts.

California continues to lead the way with nearly 10 gigawatts (GW) of installed solar capacity - enough to power more than 2 million homes - but on the other side of the country, five Eastern states - New Jersey, North Carolina, Massachusetts, New York and Connecticut - are now closing in on a total of 4 GW of installed capacity.

With so much solar activity taking place on both sides of our nation, what's happening in the heartland of America is going almost unnoticed. But it shouldn't. Solar is beginning to grow like a prairie fire across the Midwest.

In a wide area stretching from Missouri to Ohio, the heavily-traveled Interstate 70 corridor, solar is beginning to catch on in a big way. Missouri, Illinois, Indiana and Ohio now have a combined total of nearly 400 MW of installed solar capacity - enough to power about 80,000 homes. But here's the real eye-opening statistic: solar in these states is expected to grow by nearly 50 percent this year, with roughly 180 MW of new projects coming online.

Missouri provides an interesting case study. Showing strong growth over the previous year, Missouri nearly tripled its amount of installed solar capacity in 2014, according to the recently-released U.S. Solar Market Insight 2014 Year in Review. What's more, Missouri also had more than half, 55 percent, of its new electrical capacity last year come from solar energy.

In 2014, Missouri added 73 megawatts (MW) of solar electric capacity, bringing its total to 111 MW. That's enough clean, affordable energy to power more than 12,000 homes. The report went on to point out that Missouri's biggest solar gains came in commercial installations, but residential and utility-scale installations increased, too. Of the new capacity added, 37 MW were commercial, 20 MW were residential and 16



Rhone Resch

MW were utility scale. Together, these installations represented a \$187 million investment across Missouri - a 63 percent increase over the previous year.

Today, Missouri also ranks #2 in the nation in the number of professional sports facilities with installed solar systems. Among Major League Baseball teams, both the Royals and Cardinals have gone solar, while the Rams and Chiefs are among NFL teams to do so.

To put the state's solar growth in some context, the 111 MW of solar PV installed today in Missouri is nearly as much as the entire country had installed by 2004. And frankly, the state is just scratching the surface of its enormous potential.

The same, of course, can be said for Illinois, Indiana and Ohio. Today, there are more than 500 solar companies at work throughout the 4-state area, employing nearly 10,000 people, and bringing \$339 million worth of new projects online.

This steady growth across the heartland of America has helped the U.S. solar industry to grow to 174,000 workers nationwide, while pumping nearly \$18 billion a year into our economy. This remarkable growth is due, in no small part, to smart and effective public policies, such as the solar Investment Tax Credit (ITC), Net Energy Metering (NEM) and Renewable Portfolio Standards (RPS). By any measurement, these policies are paying huge dividends for both our economy and environment.

But while media attention in the past has been focused on the growth of solar on the West and East coasts, the Midwest - in keeping with its unassuming ways - is the place to keep an eye on in 2015.

Rhone Resch is president and CEO of the Solar Energy Industries Association (SEIA).



Environmentalists a worse threat than drought

California has a major drought, and that's resulted in bad stuff brought to us not by the usual suspect, global warming, but by radical environmentalists worsening the consequences.

Some of them have gone beyond that misdeed. In efforts to intervene with warming, they have also been cracking down on free scientific speech and have it in mind to play games with our entire nation's economic sustenance.

Let's start with California, an arid state that has forever known droughts. It used to deal with its water needs through crucial projects, but decided not to a while back and is now faced with serious sacrifice, as knowledgeable analysts point out.

Urban areas are being legally compelled to reduce overall water usage by a fourth, and, in line with the kind of thinking that got the state into this mess, some climate alarmists insist that greenhouse gas effects are responsible. They need to talk matters over with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, a federal agency that found in a scientifically reputable study that the drought's cause has instead been natural weather patterns.

What is just as important to keep in mind as that conclusion is that hardship does not have to result if appropriate water-providing steps are taken, such as the building of reservoirs. That's been long prevented in California by federal and state rules inspired by environmentalists. Then there's the rescue potential of a nearby ocean if more desalination plants were being developed, something made more expensive than normal by various greenie obstructions.

Yes, it is true that the lack of adequate steps to supply water trace as well to nonenvironmental political vacuities, but do not discount enviro-imperiousness. That's something that also struted to the limelight in Washington not long ago when a Democratic member of the House decided to investigate scientists whose views on warming he did not like.

Managing to infuriate the American Meteorological Association, which accused him of sending a "chilling" message, Rep. Raul Grijalva, D-Ariz., queried universities about funding received by professors who were more or less warming skeptics, although one was not. Grijalva was questioning their integrity, as the association



Jay Ambrose

said. He in effect suggested they were on the take.

Some senators did much the same, sending their inquiries to energy companies, think tanks and the like, and here is what needs to be said: They and this representative are anti-democratic, bullying free speech enemies who have no idea of what science is about -- lots of back and forth about theories, analysis and evidence -- and not much understanding of the climate dispute, either.

There happen to be all kinds of legitimate questions about the extent of the warming danger emanating from more than just a handful of the informed, and even more questions about presumptuously proposed governmental solutions that could do far more harm than good.

Consider, for instance, the harm

some worried onlookers are said to expect from President Barack Obama's so-far incomplete Clean Power Plan under which the Environmental Protection Agency would force states to write laws reducing national carbon emissions to the tune of 30 percent by 2030.

Goodbye coal, goodbye as many as 800,000 jobs, hello far steeper utility bills, hello to a much flimsier economy and hello to a less stout grid system.

Laurence Tribe, a liberal Harvard law professor who usually pats Obama on the back but is now arguing in court for those challenging him, says the whole notion is unbelievably unconstitutional. Instead of executing the law, the executive through such a move would be making laws by exercising authority it has not been legally granted, he says.

The California fix, the congressional intimidation and the Obama plan are just a hint of the financial devastation and shrinkage of freedom that could come the world's way if the extremists get their way. There are far more sensible answers even if their fears are correct, and the debate about that is far from over.

We must trust Obama to negotiate a good trade pact

WASHINGTON — Uh-oh, Democrats are in disarray.

It's over 40 million jobs, wages, unions, the middle class's future, and the export of everything from apples to oranges.

In a word, trade. Wait! Wait! It's more interesting than you might think.

The main prong is about politics, pitting President Obama against the liberal lioness of the Senate, Elizabeth Warren. As usual, we don't quite know where Hillary Clinton stands.

It's also about China, the "800-pound gorilla out there," as Obama says, and whether China or the United States makes the rules and runs the global economy because China is busily forcing other nations to sign trade agreements favorable to China.

As the White House sees it, this is about the future of the

western world and everything but sex. But since it's also about the export of American movies, it's about sex, too.

Congress is considering whether to give Obama "fast track" authority to wrap up a new trade agreement, before it eventually and inevitably decides to give him a hard time.

But unlike most contretemps in Washington, which has Republicans and Democrats snarling at each other, this has divided Democrats. Bitterly.

Warren and many of her Democratic Senate colleagues, the unions, environmentalists and human rights activists say Obama's Trans Pacific Partnership, currently under negotiation between the United States and 11 Pacific Rim nations, would let the rich get richer and leave everyone else behind.

Warren insists it would challenge U.S. sovereignty. Besides, she warns, the proposed trade pact is being negotiated in "secret."

Obama said, "I love Elizabeth but she's wrong on this."

Do you think, the president says incredulously, he'd do anything to hurt the middle class? Do you think, he snorts, that he would push the Affordable Care Act, a higher minimum wage, work to make college more affordable and seek paid sick leave and sign a bad trade deal? Do you think, he insists, 1,700 trade briefings for lawmakers is negotiating in secret?

Yes, but there's no exact language yet. There's disagreement on whether it opens new doors to lawsuits against the U.S. Congress, likely to let Obama continue negotiating on a "fast track,"



Ann McFeatters

will have months to review a final deal but can't change it, only vote it up or down. And what about workers who lost jobs to Mexico and Asia after the North American Free Trade Agreement? Won't that trend be exacerbated?

Outgoing Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., said his response to the pending pact is "No, hell no."

Obama told NBC's Chris Matthews that Japanese cars are

everywhere in America but "in Tokyo there's not an American car in sight." Without a trade agreement that forces other nations to accept U.S. products, from manufactured goods to services to innovative technology to agricultural products, the U.S. economy will no longer be the world's largest, Obama warned.

The president said he doesn't support trade for trade's sake but that this would be the most progressive trade deal ever, with environmental standards and best labor practices with teeth written into it. He says his pact would double the pot of money to help workers who lose their jobs because of trade. He noted there is a U.S. trade surplus with 11 of 14 countries with recent trade deals.

So, who is right? Both. Obama

is correct the United States can neither ignore nor stop globalization and that trade is essential to U.S. job growth in large and small businesses, vital to leveling the playing field. If we snooze, we lose to China.

But opponents are right that the devil is in the details. Until we see exact language that emerges from negotiations, there's no way to make certain the country is getting the best deal.

We must trust Obama to negotiate a good pact, but we must be vigilant in assessing it and urge Congress to reject it if it's seriously flawed.

The new Pentagon chief, Ashton Carter, says the trade pact means more to him for national security than a new aircraft carrier.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

— Philippians 3:13-14

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