

# On the Grid: Summer Blackouts 6/11/22

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This week, headlines warned that brownouts and blackouts might hit the Midwest and other parts of the country this summer because our aging electricity grid system could buckle under the stress of record-breaking heat. Predictably, some conservatives commentators, like Marc Thiessen, immediately leapt to blame clean energy policies for this crisis that has yet to happen.

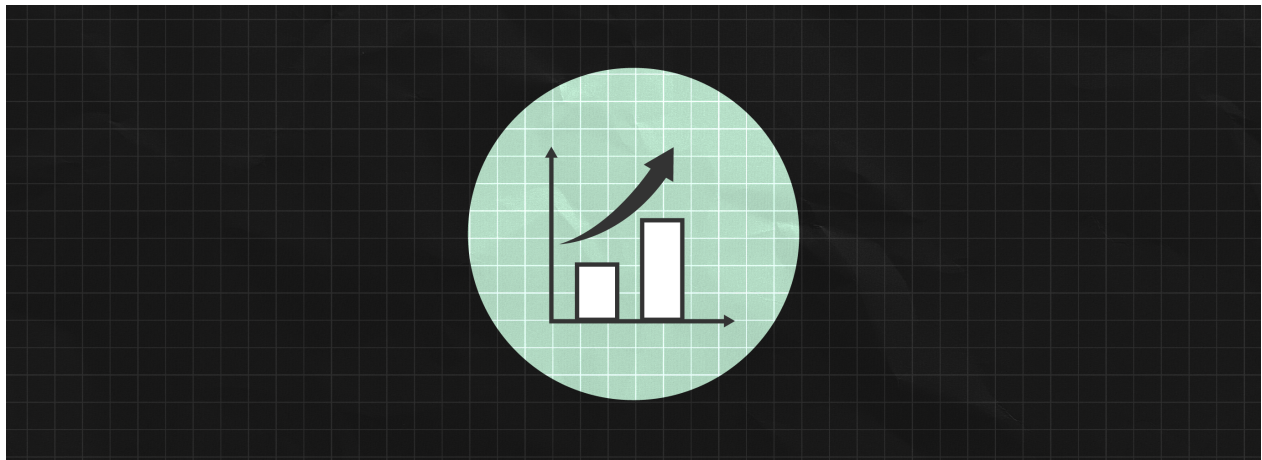
First, the facts: Our electricity system is plagued by underinvestment in modern systems and new transmission lines, and paralyzed by a perverse market incentive system that leads to the shuttering of firm, clean nuclear plants and discourages balanced planning. The concern in the Midwest is that coal plants are retiring even more quickly than expected because they're expensive to operate, very dirty, and need to be upgraded to keep going, so operators are cashing out instead. We need a grid that is clean, reliable, affordable, and secure. Today, it's becoming less so. The problem is as big in rightwing Republican-dominated Texas, with its own, isolated grid, as it is

Democratic-controlled California. In California, at least, Governor Newsom recognizes the problem and is moving to keep the Diablo Canyon nuclear plant open. In Texas, Governor Abbott's big move has been ... to try to shift the blame.

Our Decarb America modeling research lays it out for us—our net-zero future will require more than double today's electricity demand. This is a place where there *should* be bipartisan support for action modeled on the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. It would include incentives to keep nuclear open and build more, fast-tracking of smart grid modernization, more transmission lines, energy storage, and more renewables. It could also include natural gas with carbon capture as a backup where states want that. Unfortunately, that does not appear to be the direction Republicans are going, have abandoned the bipartisan Senate energy discussions.

Check out our Tweet thread on grid reliability and keep an eye out for more resources from our team on this topic.

## 1. America's Net-Zero Future is Hiring



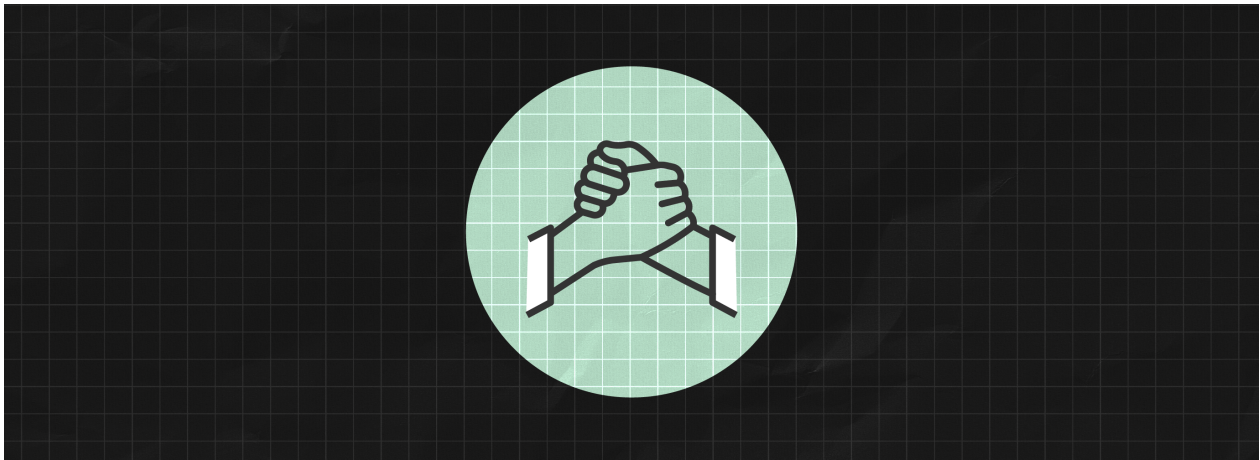
This week, we released the newest installment of our Decarb America Research Initiative, which quantified the role of a clean energy economy in generating **over 2 million jobs, economy-wide** as we move towards our net-zero by 2050 goal.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has become a case study on the need for a domestic clean energy transition and our Decarb America research showcases, in explicit detail, America's capacity to do just that. As we accelerate the development and commercialization of emerging technologies like carbon capture, direct air capture, and advanced nuclear, we are securing essential supply chains while supporting hundreds of thousands of jobs.

Our research highlights the various technologies and sectors acting as key drivers of employment throughout the coming decades. Americans in every region of the country will be able to apply diverse skill sets to opportunities in industries such as transmission and distribution, energy efficiency, biomass-based fuels, and zero-emissions vehicle manufacturing.

Lindsey Walter, Deputy Director of the Climate and Energy Program, discusses our findings in *The Washington Post's Climate 202*, [read it here](#).

## 2. Rebuilding America

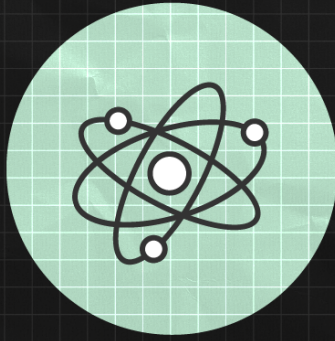


Last week, journalist and political analyst, Ezra Klein confronted the intertwined issues of poor American governance and infrastructure head-on. The challenge, as Klein discusses, does not lie in simply establishing a modern industrial policy, but in unpacking the established bureaucratic processes that have long-constrained our ability to efficiently build infrastructure.

The combination of “neglect or overregulation” in blue states and cities, and Republican obstruction and attacks on government at the national level is toxic. The issue is not government, but, as Klein put it, *our* government. Other nations like Germany, Japan, and Spain are able to build clean energy infrastructure at a much faster pace, while the United States trudges along, over budget and behind schedule.

The Biden Administration is making \$1.2 trillion investment in our nation’s infrastructure, thanks to the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. To actually deliver on this infrastructure, it is going to have to build new projects on time and show that the government can focus on ends, rather than process. That’s a big ask. Democrats, however, are as responsible for the process delays as anyone, and they need to fix it, rather than only blame Republicans.

## 3. A Tale of Two Bills



The impact of Russia's unrelenting aggression over the past several months has cascaded into nearly every sector, *especially* energy. Now, a bipartisan coalition of policymakers is stepping forward to ensure American energy security and technological leadership are at the forefront of a shifting global energy market by securing essential nuclear fuel supply chains.

Two bills, the International Nuclear Energy Act of 2022 and the Fueling Our Nuclear Future Act, have recently been introduced in the Senate. In our new [memo](#), Senior Fellow for Nuclear, Alan Ahn, and nuclear policy advisor Ryan Norman, compare the fuel provisions in the bills.

**Our take:** Both of these bills are a testament to the shifting attitudes around nuclear energy and the growing bipartisan recognition that nuclear technology is integral to our net-zero future. These bills collectively introduce urgently needed policy solutions that would enable the United States to domestically produce high-assay low-enriched uranium (HALEU) fuel for advanced reactors, as well as low-enriched uranium needed by the nation's existing nuclear fleet.

## 4. What We're Reading and Listening To



- [Kelsey Piper](#), in Vox, tackles the issue of climate anxiety, confronting the notion that the Earth will be unlivable for future generations. A parent herself, Piper writes of the harm that alarmist messaging can have on children growing up in the midst of a global climate movement.

- Ben Steinberg and Dr. Ellen Hughes-Cromwick, the Climate and Energy Program's Senior Resident Fellow, in *The Hill*, discuss the dismal state of America's electric vehicle (EV) battery supply chain, offering four objectives that reinforce domestic battery supply chains, cut our reliance on China, and strengthen American leadership in the global EV market.
- Ryan Knutson, in the Wall Street Journal's *The Journal* podcast series, sat down with Phred Dvorak, a Wall Street Journal reporter specializing in the clean energy transition, to do a deep dive on solar panel tariffs following President Biden's emergency suspension of tariffs earlier in the week.