

**NEWSLETTER** *Published June 12, 2026 · 8 minute read*

# On the Grid: Crude Politics

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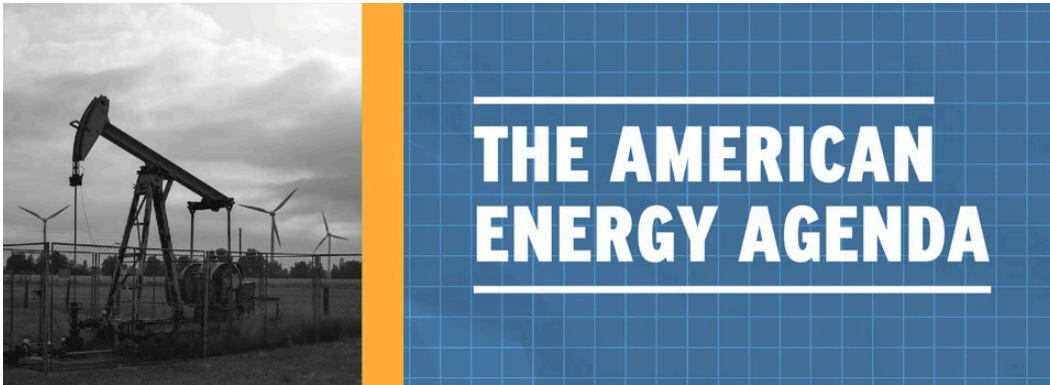
ON THE GRID



Hi Friend!

Welcome back to *On the Grid*, Third Way's bi-weekly newsletter, where we'll recap how we're working to deploy every clean energy technology as quickly and affordably as possible.

We're excited to have you join us!



For too long, the national debate on climate and energy policy has assumed Americans are ideological about energy—either vehemently pro-fossil fuels or deeply committed to a clean energy transition. This binary approach to energy policy obscures the reality on the ground: most Americans are ambivalent about individual energy technologies. They care less about *how* electricity is made and more about whether it is affordable and reliable. Now, for the first time in over a decade, prominent political figures have begun to shift their position on energy to reflect voters' more tech-neutral attitudes.

- In Alaska, Mary Peltola has been unapologetic in her support for Alaska's resource economy. In Congress and on the campaign trail, she has openly supported oil development in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska. Peltola has argued that Alaskans should have the right to develop their own resources in ways that support local jobs and economic growth. At the same time, she has emphasized that projects need local buy-in and environmental safeguards.
- In Texas, James Talarico has embraced an all-of-the-above energy approach, arguing that Texas should expand clean energy, strengthen the grid, and continue producing the oil and gas that power much of the state's economy. He has "pushed back against national Democrats who want to hurt the Texas oil and gas industry" and framed energy policy, including the oil and gas industry, as an opportunity to create jobs.
- Even in California, the center of gravity is shifting toward affordability. Xavier Becerra has made rising costs a central theme of his gubernatorial campaign, highlighting the

cost of everything from housing and insurance to electricity and gasoline. He has defended the role that traditional energy companies continue to play in the state's economy, arguing that companies like Chevron employ thousands of workers and remain essential to meeting California's energy needs. *"Chevron employs a lot of very hard-working people, talented folks — engineers, construction workers. That's the problem with politics: They're not the bad guy. Does everybody here drive an electric vehicle?"*

- In New York, Governor Kathy Hochul has fully embraced an all-of-the-above energy strategy. That includes building more nuclear in upstate New York, strengthening the grid by making better use of grid flexibility tools, and ensuring that the state's climate goals remain achievable and affordable for consumers.
- In Virginia, Governor Abigail Spanberger rejoined the multi-state cap-and-invest system, the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI), while simultaneously working to streamline permitting for rooftop solar. Spanberger also formally recognized nuclear as an eligible resource for meeting clean energy targets, helping encourage further investment in the technology.
- And in Pennsylvania, Governor Josh Shapiro is threading a similar needle, pushing to expand clean energy and modernizing the state's energy mix while simultaneously defending Pennsylvania's role as a major natural gas producer and aggressively intervening to prevent sharp increases in electricity prices.

**Why This Matters:** Different states have different challenges. Alaska's politics are not California's politics, and Texas isn't New York or Pennsylvania. And Democrats, by and large, are recognizing this. That's not to say they are abandoning climate goals—they're not. They are, however, recognizing that voters expect their representatives to make choices that protect consumer welfare today, while continuing to build the energy infrastructure of the future. That means being honest about the continued role of oil and gas, protecting job security for oil and gas professionals, and ensuring fossil fuels remain cheap and affordable for those who need them, while continuing to make the case that clean energy is critical for meeting growing energy demand, lowering greenhouse emissions, and protecting consumers from the kind of price volatility inherent to gas markets that has repeatedly driven up energy bills.

As Emily Becker, Director of Communications for Third Way's Climate and Energy Program, told the Huffington Post, *"It is unrealistic for policymakers to only talk about oil and gas in a negative light, because people are deeply reliant on oil and gas in their day-to-day lives. We can't tell people that every time you gas up your car, you're doing something wrong."*

**What We're Doing:** No part of this shift is particularly surprising to us. For the past several years, we've argued that a durable clean energy politics would require a more pragmatic,

all-of-the-above message rooted in affordability, reliability, energy security, and economic growth, rather than finger-wagging and demonizing fossil fuels.

We've spent years making the case for a truly all-of-the-above approach that expands renewables, accelerates nuclear deployment, modernizes energy infrastructure, and recognizes the continued role of natural gas in supporting reliability and economic growth. Our goal has never been to choose between affordability, energy security, or decarbonization; it's been to figure out how to achieve all three.

Through efforts like Project RECORD and our broader public opinion research, we're exploring how voters are thinking about affordability, reliability, and clean energy, and where those priorities reinforce or conflict with one another. We are continuing to work with policymakers, industry leaders, and clean energy advocates to better understand what a durable clean energy strategy looks like in an era of growing cost pressures.



Appropriations bills rarely generate the same attention as permitting fights or contentious debates over tax credits. Still, they're often one of the best indicators of future energy policy. Last month, House Republicans moved their FY27 Energy and Water Appropriations bill forward, setting up potential consideration on the House floor in the next few weeks. There's a lot packed into this year's budget bill—and you can read our full take on that [here](#)—but a few things jumped out.

1. **Nuclear is a clear winner.** Funding for nuclear programs is largely protected—and in some cases expanded—even as other energy programs face cuts.
2. **More Transparency. No Accountability.** The bill includes new requirements on Department of Energy staffing, spending, and grant management, reflecting growing concern about DOE's ability to execute its mission following staffing cuts. While

lawmakers are demanding more transparency, they fall short of meaningfully constraining the administration's ability to cancel grants or redirect programs.

3. **DOE is being rebranded.** The bill codifies much of the Trump Administration's proposed reorganization of DOE, including changes to office names, missions, and funding structures. The move steers resources toward fossil fuels, nuclear, and geothermal, while deprioritizing renewables and grid infrastructure that, together with clean firm power, is critical for building a more affordable, reliable, and resilient grid.
4. **LPO gets a hollow rebrand.** The bill embraces the Trump Administration's rebrand of the Loan Programs Office as the Office of Energy Dominance Financing, but provides only a portion of the funding and staff requested by the administration. It does, however, preserve several existing loan authorities, like the Title 17 credit subsidies, which the administration had hoped to eliminate.
5. **The commercialization gap.** The bill leaves funding for the Office of Technology Commercialization flat, even as the office is set to oversee a larger portfolio.

***What We're Doing:*** The technologies that will power the future, the offices that support them, and the programs that will help bring them to market all depend on one thing—*funding*. We've spent much of this past year deeply engaged in the appropriations process, helping lead a coalition of dozens of organizations that developed 61 policy proposals and submitted nearly 1,000 appropriations requests to lawmakers on both sides of the aisle. As the Senate begins work on its own version of a budget bill, we'll continue tracking the negotiations and sharing what we're learning about where energy innovations policy is headed.



The clean energy conversation is expanding...and so are we! The Climate and Energy Program is looking for people with talent and a passion for climate solutions to fill a new

role on our team: [Senior Policy Advisor, Electricity](#). Please share this opportunity with your network!



- [Rowen Price](#), in the *National Interest*, argues that assessing the state of America’s nuclear revival requires looking beyond splashy announcements and instead focusing on whether projects are clearing the regulatory hurdles needed to actually reach commercialization.
- [Lisa Friedman and Brad Plumer](#), in the *New York Times*, highlight a broader shift in how a growing number of Democrats are adopting a more pragmatic stance on oil and gas as they balance climate goals with concern about affordability, reliability, and economic growth.
- [Bill Loveless](#), host of Columbia’s *Energy Exchange* podcast, talks with Jessica Uhl, former CFO of Shell and president of GE Vernova and current Senior Advisor for the Three Cairns Group, about what tariffs and trade disruptions mean for the speed and scale of the energy transition.