

Mr. President:

I was extremely pleased to hear you say that “We will restore science to its rightful place...” in your very fine inaugural speech. I couldn’t agree more. I share your apparent enthusiasm for reality-based policies, especially if it also means escaping from regulatory capture and our own pre-conceptions and ideologies. We are past the point where we have the resources to waste on illusory, self-serving or exclusively short-term solutions.

For the last two years I’ve been trying in as rigorous a manner as I can to realistically assess different renewable energy technologies - in particular wind turbines. I have been surprised and disappointed to find that seemingly no one has taken the time to truly evaluate either their costs or their benefits. As a primary example, I can find no study that documents any CO<sub>2</sub> savings as a result of installing wind turbines anywhere in the world, let alone any that were peer-reviewed. Perhaps I’ve not looked in the right places, but if such a study existed and was favorable I’m sure the various wind industry groups would make it available. The numbers that do exist for CO<sub>2</sub> savings are based on calculations that are in turn based on assumptions, some of which are very plausibly ill-founded. Continuing to spend money on something that hasn’t been assessed and measured is not intelligent governing.

I fear that your enthusiasm for renewable energy, as laudable as it is, may lead your subordinates to invest without taking the time to see which of these technologies really works. Note that I am not saying wind turbines are ineffective. I am saying that we don’t know, and it is foolish to pursue something this expensive without that knowledge.

I would encourage you to issue guidance to the Department of Energy that we need to proceed carefully with regards to wind turbines along with all the other technologies, and proceed only when we are as sure as we can be of the reality surrounding them. I would encourage you to do this quickly, as projects are now in development that would not only potentially waste a great deal of money that could be better spent on known solutions - especially conservation, but could also result in significant environmental damage on their own.

Sincerely yours,

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