

THE REVIEW-JOURNAL'S VIEW

Green rhetoric doesn't align with reality

With precious little time left in the 2021 legislative session, Nevada lawmakers have begun a rushed debate on a major green energy bill that supporters argue is essential to reducing the state's carbon output. As is becoming more and more common, however, this latest effort to push renewable power development faces opposition from environmental activists.

Senate Bill 448, sponsored by state Sen. Chris Brooks, a Las Vegas Democrat, seeks to promote green energy infrastructure and to ramp up subsidies for electric vehicle charging stations throughout the state. The proposal would make it easier for NV Energy to build out its "Greenlink" initiative to create a "renewable energy highway" capable of transmitting green power throughout the state.

But at the bill's first hearing last week, representatives from at least two environmental groups expressed dismay that a proposal ostensibly designed to be eco-friendly could itself be environmentally destructive.

"Instead of instructing state agencies to complete a clear-eyed, comprehensive review of where renewable energy might be appropriate in this state," complained Patrick Donnelly, Nevada director of the Center for Biological Diversity, "SB448 would throw open the doors to our most wild and pristine landscapes and rely on the tender mercies of the market and fossil fuel companies like NV Energy to decide the fate of Nevada's wildlands."

And here we have on open display a couple of the dirty little secrets that green activists don't want you to know. First, many progressives don't just oppose fossil fuels, they're averse to energy development in general and economic growth in particular. Second, transitioning to 100 percent renewable energy while maintaining our current standard of living will require a whole lot of digging, building and environmental disruption and isn't even technologically feasible at this point.

There's "a central, and until now largely ignored, aspect of the energy



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transition," wrote Mark P. Mills, a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute, in a recent op-ed for the Wall Street Journal. "It requires mining industries and infrastructure that don't exist."

Mr. Mills notes that the International Energy Agency — a Paris-based outfit that "works with countries around the world to shape energy policies for a secure and sustainable future," according to its website — issued a 287-page report this month tacitly acknowledging that many ambitious green energy goals are all but unattainable given current production of minerals such as lithium, graphite and nickel that are necessary to make the transition.

"As the IEA observes, albeit in cautious bureaucratese, there are no plans to fund and build the necessary mines and refineries," Mr. Mills observes. "The supply of (energy transition minerals) is entirely aspirational. And if it were pursued at the quantities dictated by the goals of the energy transition, the world would face daunting environmental, economic and social challenges, along with geopolitical risks."

Indeed, Mr. Donnelly's own agency is currently knee-deep in an effort to use the Endangered Species Act and a

plant known as Tiehm's buckwheat to kill a proposed lithium mining operation at Rhyolite Ridge in Esmeralda County. Mr. Mills points out that — thanks to green lawsuits and other regulatory barriers — the IEA concludes it takes, on average, more than "16 years to move mining projects from discovery to first production."

In addition, Mr. Mills reports, "energy use per pound mined is even trending up. This is no arcane nuance. It's the key hidden factor that determines whether, or to what extent, a clean-energy machine actually reduces carbon-dioxide emissions on net. The IEA data show that, depending on the location and nature of future mines, the emissions from obtaining (energy transmission minerals) could wipe out much or most of the emissions saved by driving electric cars."

Nevadans have been repeatedly assured that a full-throttled move toward a green energy future will bring jobs and economic prosperity with minimal discomfort. Unfortunately, as even many environmental groups concede through their faithful opposition to renewable energy development, much of this rhetoric simply doesn't align with reality.

The views expressed above are those of the Las Vegas Review-Journal. All other opinions expressed on the Opinion and Commentary pages are those of the individual artist or author indicated.