

Libertarians may oppose government regulation on principle, and to some extent that stance explains the Trump Administration's environmental and energy policies. But the Trump Administration clearly views the fossil fuel sector as something more than another overly-regulated industry. Instead, expansion of this particular industry is seen as something good in itself.

Thus, the Administration not only wants to ignore the issue of climate change. Rather, its persistent goal is to expand fossil fuels, filling the atmosphere with as much carbon as humanly possible. This explains its passion for pressing energy policy even beyond what industry wants, such as repealing methane regulations supported by the major oil companies, refusing to negotiate over car standards with California despite the unanimous desire of the car industry for a deal, threatening to open areas to oil exploration even where the industry has no immediate interest, and repudiating the Paris Agreement despite widespread pressure from leading American businesses to keep it.

Trump's personal admiration for fossil fuels is well-known. One of Trump's best-known quotes was the claim that "[w]e've ended the war on beautiful, clean coal." Although he was much ridiculed for this statement, it was not just an example of his penchant for attention-getting, but rather an outgrowth of a fully developed philosophy about the roots of national wealth and power.

The GOP's 2016 platform aptly expresses this philosophy with a celebration of extractive industries:

"We are the party of America's growers, producers, farmers, ranchers, foresters, miners, commercial fishermen, and all those who bring from the earth the crops, minerals, energy, and the bounties of our seas that are the lifeblood of our economy. Their labor and ingenuity. . . powers our economy, creates millions of jobs, and feeds billions of people around the world."

Regarding energy in particular, the platform had this to say:

"Our country has greater energy resources than any other place on earth. Our engineers and miners, the men and women whose labor taps the forces of nature, are the best in the world. Together, the people of America's energy sector provide us with power that is clean, affordable, secure, and abundant."

Democrats, of course, are said to be clueless about this as well as so many other matters: “The Democratic Party does not understand that coal is an abundant, clean, affordable, reliable domestic energy resource. Those who mine it and their families should be protected from the Democratic Party’s radical anticoal agenda.” Moreover, the platform portrays fossil fuels as the heart of economic prosperity and security:

“Energy exports will create high paying jobs throughout the United States, reduce our nation’s trade deficit, grow our economy, and boost the energy security of our allies and trading partners. We remain committed to aggressively expanding trade opportunities and opening new markets for American energy through multilateral and bilateral agreements, whether current, pending, or negotiated in the future.”

The Trump Administration is fully on board with this philosophy, as exemplified by the title of a press release announcing two executive orders: “President Donald J. Trump Is Unleashing American Energy Dominance.” Trump himself has endorsed the energy dominance theme, and his Secretary of Energy has laid out its meaning:

“An energy dominant America means self-reliant. It means a secure nation, free from the geopolitical turmoil of other nations who seek to use energy as an economic weapon. An energy dominant America will export to markets around the world, increasing our global leadership and our influence.”

As another striking example, consider the Department of Energy’s new terminology: natural gas is now “freedom gas.” And so we have the Assistant Secretary for Fossil Fuels [saying](#) that “[w]ith the US in another year of record-setting natural gas production, I am pleased that the Department of Energy is doing what it can to promote an efficient regulatory system that allows for *molecules of US freedom* to be exported to the world.”

For some, there is a theological dimension to this adoration of fossil fuels. One evangelical [website](#) credits God with creating fossil fuels from the trees swept away by the Great Flood, singing the praises of these fossil fuels: “Where we once froze to death, now coal gives us warmth. Where we once were in darkness, now oil gives us light. Where we once struggled to plow a few yards of rocky dirt, hoping to grow enough food to last the winter, now diesel and gasoline give us hundreds of acres of food.” And so “we praise the Lord God Almighty, Who created nature for humanity, not humanity for nature.”

Whether based on theology or economics, the upshot is a celebration of fossil fuels as a great good, and a corresponding desire to expand their use wherever possible. Of course, in today's world, the reality is that fossil fuels threaten public health due to pollution and threaten national prosperity and security due to climate change. Their economic value is fading as renewable energy, storage, and now electric vehicles come to the forefront. Thus, the Trump Administration is fighting against the tide in its crusade to make fossil fuels the centerpiece of our society. But they seem to be blinded by their love of carbon, unable to see that its day is passing.