Sen. Lamar Alexander (R – Agribusiness). Trying to fool all of the people all of the time.

A few years ago, a friend of mine suggested starting a blog entitled something like, "Why The Wall Street Journal Editorial Page Was Idiotic Today." You'd never run out of material for posts!

Certainly that was the case today, as Senator Lamar Alexander and Representative Mike Pompeo, both Republicans, make a case against the wind energy tax credit. Essentially, their argument is that the credit is tantamount to "negative energy pricing," which in their parlance means that wind producers get paid whether or not there is a specific demand for the energy at the time that it is produced.

This is a horrible policy, the legislators argue:

> The Obama administration and other advocates of wind power argue that the subsidy provided by the tax credit allows the wind industry to sustain American jobs. But they are jobs that exist only because of the subsidy. Keeping a weak technology alive that can't make it on its own won't create nearly as many jobs as the private sector could create if it had the kind of low-cost, reliable, clean electricity that wind power simply can't generate.
>
> While the cost of renewable energy has declined over the years, it is still far more expensive than conventional sources. And even the administration's secretary of energy, Steven Chu, calls wind "a mature technology," which should mean it is sufficiently advanced to compete in a free market without government subsidies. If wind power cannot compete on its own after 20 years without costly special privileges, it never will.

This is a little bit rich, even for Republican members of Congress. The idea that nuclear and coal power companies have any standing to complain about subsidies for *other* energy sources doesn't pass the laugh test. Both sources are massively subsidized by the federal government — they swamp anything that wind receives. As Sean noted last year, for example, the nuclear power industry faces virtually no

exposure for any accident risks because of federal legislation. And the petroleum industry also benefits from overwhelming federal largesse.

I'll take coal subsidies AND what's behind Door #3

As Monty Hall would say, Let's Make A Deal: why don't we tally up all the subsidies that oil, coal, and nuclear get versus what wind gets, and see who benefits more? Alexander and Pompeo cite to a study from the "NorthBridge Group", castigating the wind energy credit. But of course they provide no link to it: even a cursory glance at the report reveals that it only looks at the wind credit and ignores the subsidy regime that underlies US power production in every other sector.

Moreover, all this fails to account for the greenhouse gas emissions produced by fossil fuels. Now, I'll make a deal with Senator Alexander and Congressman Pompeo: put a price on carbon, and then we can get rid of the wind energy credit. Somehow I don't think that they will take me up on that, because climate denial has become an article of faith for the Republican Party: the first time that denial of basic science has been a pillar of an American political party's ideological creed.

Of course, if Alexander and Pompeo are so concerned about subsidies, I can think of a few: subsidies for sugar, which Alexander voted to keep. Or how about the vote on limiting farm subsidies to people earning less than $750,000? Alexander opposed that, too.

If I were a particularly cynical sort, I might suspect that Alexander and Pompeo, both of whom represent states that have substantial corn production, which helps produce ethanol, were attacking the wind subsidy simply because less wind power might mean more business for, say, ethanol power.

Sometimes I think these people aren't even trying anymore…