

Expectations for Perry were about as low as you can get. He advocated closing the Department of Energy but then forgot the name during a televised debate. He was appointed by Trump, whose fondness for fossil fuels knows no limits, and at the time Perry was selected had little idea of what DOE actually does. He's also from Texas, where oil is king. But actually, he's caused relatively little harm. Michael Lewis has written a [recent piece](#) about DOE describing Perry as ineffectual. But there can be worse things than being ineffectual –just look at Scott Pruitt, Perry's destructive counter-part at EPA.

As Perry discovered after he agreed to take the job, the bulk of DOE's work relates to the design and production of nuclear weapons. He's spent quite a bit of time touring that part of the program, although it's not clear whether he's learned all that much. On clean energy issues, he's been relatively good. Trump saddled him with an underling who hates clean energy programs, but Perry has touted those same programs. According to one [report](#):

“Although EPA Chief Scott Pruitt seems more than happy to blow up his own agency, Perry has gone in the opposite direction. The Energy Department has been cheerleading non-stop for renewables and clean tech with a flood of press releases, and Perry has backed that up with missives from his own @SecretaryPerry Twitter account.”

“All that activity didn't stop when the Trump Administration — apparently without a heads up to Perry — appointed fossil fuel lobbyist Daniel Simmons to head EERE, the Energy Department's Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy.”

A quick look at the DOE [homepage](#) confirms that much of it is devoted to stories about the Department's research and promotion efforts for renewable energy.

Perry seems to be in a muddle over climate science. On the one hand, he has [said](#) it may be mostly caused by ocean currents and other unspecified natural forces, which makes very little sense. (What's driving a change in ocean currents, one might ask?) On the other hand, he's also said this: “It shouldn't be a debate about is the climate change changing, is man having an effect on it. The question should be ... just how much and what are the policy changes that we need to make to affect that?” Which is a whole lot more sensible than some of his crazed colleagues

elsewhere in the Trump Administration.

The biggest concern involves a task force Perry commissioned to study the effect of renewables on grid stability and baseload power, which seems like an effort to undermine state renewable energy programs. But it's not clear what the final report will look like, and a leaked [draft](#) seemed relatively reasonable. If Perry is planning an attack on renewables, he'll get pushback from some key Republicans from states that produce a lot of wind power. Senator Grassley has already laid down a marker:

“I'm concerned that a hastily developed study, which appears to pre-determine that variable, renewable sources such as wind have undermined grid reliability, will not be viewed as credible, relevant or worthy of valuable taxpayer resources.”

The report was originally supposed to be out in June, and then in July. But we should know soon about whether, as anticipated, it was designed as a drive-by attack on renewable energy.

Nobody expects Perry to become a heroic champion of renewable energy. Nor *should* they expect that. But he doesn't actually seem to be on a campaign to destroy his own agency or sabotage its mission. Compared with some of his fellow Trump appointees, that makes him seem pretty good right now. Yes, that's a sign of how far the bar has been lowered, but it's still the truth.