To make the energy transition work, we'll need a lot more energy lawyers. That means a lot of energy law profs to teach them — many more than we have today. Law schools are waking up to the need to hire in the area. So if you're thinking of law teaching, it could be worthwhile to dive into this field.

Let's start with the first question: why do we need more energy lawyers? Our basic strategy for the next phase of climate policy is to electrify everything possible, from transportation to industry. That will require a huge increase in the amount of electric generation, at the same time that we're also replacing existing fossil fuel capacity with renewables and storage. That in turn means that we need people with legal expertise relevant to permitting generators and transmission, both of which are highly regulated. And we need people who can address the electricity pricing issues that come along with basically revamping our power system. In other words, people who have expertise in energy law (and also in relevant areas of environmental law, such as environmental impact statements).

Second question: are there enough teachers to train these lawyers? The answer is definitely no. In 2019, we put together a list of every professor teaching an energy law class and everyone who had written an academic article about energy in the previous few years. We ended up with about 70 people. That may sound like a lot, but it amounts to about one energy law professors for every two or three law schools. What about new hires? John Erwin did a study of the entry-level professors hired in 2021, a very active hiring year. About 10% were in the broad area of environmental law, but that was still only 11 people. It's going to take a long time to make up the deficit at that rate. The good news is that Erwin saw indications of a possible upward trend, which hopefully will continue.

IF you know anything about law schools these days, you may have spotted an important omission in these figures. Law schools rely heavily on lecturers – basically lawyers who also teach part-time – to cover more specialized fields. I don't have any way to count how many lecturers teach energy or environmental law. Lecturers certainly help fill the gap, and they're often invaluable. But it's also crucial to have full-time faculty in the area. They tend to have a broader perspective than practicing lawyers, who have more specialized expertise. Only permanent people who are around full-time in order to build a program, as opposed to staffing individual courses. And finally, it's also important to have people who are researching in the area and coming up with new ideas.

The bottom line is that we have a supply chain problem. Too few energy law

professors in inventory and not enough in the pipeline. But as they say in econ., every shortage is an opportunity for new entrants. Let’s hope the market responds in the way the economists think it does, with new entrants and increased supply.