

“You know, I’ve joined many of you on the groundbreaking . . . And as I told my Republican friends, we’ll even do their districts too. (Laughter.) And I’ll be there for the ribbon cutting. (Laughter.)”

That was President Biden tweaking the GOP members of Congress who had all voted against the Inflation Reduction Act but will be sure to show up for the ribbon cutting to take credit for new projects.

As part of this effort to bring home the benefits of the IRA to Republican districts, Biden planned to visit Lauren Boebert ten days ago, The visit was cancelled at the last minute due to the impending Israeli invasion of Gaza, but we know what Biden would have said.

Here are his comments from an earlier speech: “CS Wind is Congresswoman Lauren Boebert — you know that very quiet Republican lady? “It’s in her district. Who, along with every other Republican, voted against this bill. And it’s making all this possible. And she railed against its passage.”

Biden’s comment illustrates a deep disconnect in the Republican party.

On the one hand, Republicans hate clean energy in the abstract. Want some examples?

1. President Trump famously accused windmills of causing cancer.
2. Kathy McMorris Rodgers, chair of the House Energy Committee, called expansion of renewable energy part of Biden’s pro-China energy agenda.
3. Sen. J.D. Vance (R-OH) says tax credits for electric vehicles help only rich people and China. He celebrates the “freedom” of all Americans to choose gas cars.
4. Senator Joni Ernst (R-IA) warned of “Biden blackouts that would make it impossible to run fans and air conditioners on even the hottest days of the summer” thanks to “the Democrats’ push towards renewables.”
5. Tucker Carlson, long the voice of American conservatism, said “ we are watching countries around the world... collapsing and entering into a state of revolution because these morons tampered with their energy grids.” Carlson predicted life expectancy will “drop to the floor” if we “tamper with” fossil fuels, which are “our greatest blessing,”

On the other hand, Republicans cheer major investments in clean energy. Gov. Kristi Noem of South Dakota applauded a new \$1 billion renewable aviation fuel plant as the biggest economic development in the state’s history.

In Ohio, the governor applauded the state’s role as “an emerging force in electric vehicle

and EV parts manufacturing.”

The governor of West Virginia said, “There are an awful lot of people who never would have believed that a coal guy would welcome with open arms alternative sources of energies.”

In Oklahoma, the governor called for diversifying the state’s energy grid and touted the state’s #10 ranking as a producer of renewable energy.

The involvement of Red states with the energy transition will only grow, since most of the planned new multi-billion dollar battery and EV factories will be located there.

Here’s a really striking [example](#), involving a \$2.5 billion expansion of a factory making solar panels:

“That expansion is occurring partially in the district of conservative firebrand Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene — who has described climate change as ‘actually healthy for us’ and has blasted Democrats’ bill. Greene, however, recently told POLITICO that she’s ‘excited to have jobs’ in her district that will come from the Q Cells announcement.”

The negotiations over the debt ceiling illustrate the GOP’s conflicted views. The House bill to raise the debt ceiling repealed big chunks of the IRA. Some Republicans who voted for that expressed misgivings. When Biden said that tampering with IRA was a red line for him, Republicans immediately dropped their demand like a hot potato.

I’m sure Biden was hoping that voters would credit him for the new factories, at the expense of his Republican opponents. It’s not clear if that’s working out, partly because those Republicans have generally been eager to embrace the investment and jobs. At the same time, though, those Republicans aren’t going to be eager to shut down the new factories and infrastructure in their own communities.

The Republican Party’s schizophrenic attitude toward clean energy can’t last forever.

The evidence [shows](#) that the IRA is translating into jobs. In 2022, both energy jobs and clean energy jobs grew in every state and in Washington, D.C., according to DOE. The Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages found that employment in power generation and supply has recovered has reached its highest levels in a decade.

Sooner or later the party will either have to embrace renewables and electric vehicles or threaten the livelihoods of many of the blue collar workers who belong to its base. This is part of the larger question of how a party that is largely oriented toward reclaiming an

imagined past America will manage to adjust to the demands of the future.