



Freezing in the Dark: The Staggering Costs & Risks of RI's Green Energy Policies

*State Lawmakers Have Been Negligent in
Crafting RI's "Net Zero" Energy Strategy*

*RI Energy, RI PUC, and ISO-NE Admit Cost &
Capacity Dangers*

Center Offers Recommendations

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In their quest to plan for a *sustainable* future, state officials have enacted policies and goals that now can be shown to be dangerously *unsustainable*.

Lawmakers should have only one goal when it comes to public policy: to advance the well-being of the people. However, when it comes to energy policy, Ocean State policymakers are continuing their **#AssaultOnRIFamilies** by putting politics first.

Instead of crafting policies that would lead to abundant, low-cost, eco-friendly, safe, and reliable energy options for the public ... Rhode Island lawmakers have irrationally implemented agenda-driven policies that would cripple prosperity, cause more harm to the environment, and put state residents at risk of physical danger.

Due to decades of state legislative and executive actions on energy that are not supported by valid research or technologic advancements, **Ocean State residents already pay some of the highest electricity prices in the country**. In February of 2025, *RI Energy President Greg Cornett* admitted that it is indeed state public policy that is driving the high cost of electricity for Ocean State residents.ⁱ

At closer inspection, this lack of legislative due diligence is alarming, as honest debate was never conducted to properly evaluate the many energy paths available. The Left’s political narrative was reflexively accepted, apparently without question ... a narrative that mainstream experts believe to be unsubstantiated.

For instance, if legitimate and thorough analysis would have been conducted, Ocean State lawmakers would have come to the same conclusion as a 2024 report, *Grading The Grid*, by the prestigious *Mackinac Center* in Michiganⁱⁱ. When considering all factors, their report found that **traditional fossil-fuel energy sources out-ranked “green” energy alternatives ... across the board**.

Report Card on U.S. energy production.

We ranked eight key energy industry sectors based on their ability to meet the growing demand for affordable, reliable, and clean electric generation.

| Report Card | | | | | | |
|---------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|------|------------------------|--------------------|-------------|
| Energy Source | Capacity Reliability | Environmental/ Human Impact | Cost | Technology/ Innovation | Market Feasibility | Final Grade |
| Natural gas | 9 | 9 | 10 | 10 | 9 | A |
| Coal | 8 | 7 | 9 | 9 | 7 | B- |
| Petroleum | 6 | 7 | 8 | 8 | 6 | C- |
| Nuclear | 10 | 10 | 7 | 10 | 7 | B+ |
| Hydroelectric | 10 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 6 | B- |
| Wind | 5 | 6 | 5 | 6 | 6 | F |
| Solar | 5 | 5 | 5 | 8 | 6 | F |
| Geothermal | 6 | 9 | 5 | 8 | 5 | D+ |

Figure 1: Mackinac Center's "Grading The Grid"

In addition to multiple reports from credible energy experts, the three major organizations responsible for the allocation, pricing, and delivery of electrical power to our Ocean State – *ISO New England, the RI Public Utilities Commission, and RI Energy* – **have all warned** that our state’s energy policies will lead to substantial and unaffordable costs to be imposed on ratepayers ... not to mention grid capacity concerns.

It is also becoming increasingly clear that speculation about climate change as an existential threat to humanity is not supported by credible mainstream science. The truth is that past and ongoing innovation in fossil fuel technologies have helped reduce climate-related disaster deaths by 98% and have greatly improved the quality of life for most of earth’s inhabitants.ⁱⁱⁱ

The reality is that alternative “green” energy sources are not yet ready for prime time. Recognizing this reality is key to reversing the harmful climate policies facing our Ocean State ... and to refocus on policies that will allow our state to enjoy more resilient and affordable energy in a more sustainable environment.

And it is good politics to amend Rhode Island’s energy strategy, as voters are no longer willing to make significant financial and freedom-of-choice sacrifices for relatively insignificant climate change impact. The backlash against policies – and lawmakers – that are based on unrealistic assumptions could be severe.

Legislative and Bureaucratic Negligence

In developing a long-term energy strategy for Rhode Island, state lawmakers and department officials blindly prioritized adherence to politicized and arbitrary green energy targets, rather than seeking the most cost-effective and reliable means to meet anticipated future demands for electricity ... and to provide for a safe, reliable, and prosperous quality of life for the people of Rhode Island.

In their zeal to comply with the extremist climate-change agenda, policymakers have willfully neglected to consider the many cost, capacity, and environmental drawbacks of their current Net Zero strategy.

According to a major 2024 report, *The Staggering Costs of New England’s Green Energy Policies*, co-sponsored by our Center along with six other regional energy coalition partners, the anticipated dramatic increase in electricity demand, coupled with the plan to rapidly eliminate abundant and low-cost fossil fuels - and replace them with unreliable and expensive alternative sources of energy - means that **there may not be enough affordable power to heat and cool our homes**, reducing our current standard of living.^{iv}

Yet Rhode Island lawmakers neglected to conduct any meaningful cost-vs-benefit analysis. And if not changed, our state’s existing decarbonization plans could lead to dire circumstances, including ... **freezing in the dark** on the coldest of winter nights.

Worse, state policymakers and energy professionals cannot point to any comprehensive alternative energy plan that can reliably, technologically, and affordably lead our state into a prosperous tomorrow.

The *Rhode Island Public Utilities Commission* has repeatedly cautioned lawmakers about the cost of the proposed transition to “clean” energy. For example, in written testimony to the House Corporations Committee about H7811, the 2024 Energy Storage Act, RI PUC Administrator Linda George states, "Finally, the bill imposes a ratepayer-funded procurement process all without any disclosure of the likely **substantial**

costs to be imposed upon the ratepayers." Administrator George also expressed concerns about the tight timeline that the bill called for.^v

Even Rhode Island's primary utility company, *Rhode Island Energy*, in response to specific inquiries made by the *RI Center for Freedom and Prosperity*, acknowledges there is **no actual plan to upgrade grid infrastructure to meet future state electricity demands**, citing the issue of "affordability".^{vi} In February 2025, the utility indicated that it was just starting to examine this matter, stating to the Center, "Discussions are currently taking place to determine when and how RIE can incorporate potentially more aggressive adoption trends to better align with the state's climate goals."

However, multiple recent reports demonstrate that these climate goals are not reasonably achievable. It appears that state lawmakers do not realize that the technological capability does not currently exist to produce and store sufficient electrical capacity at an affordable level; this according to New England's regional transmission organization, ISO New England (ISO-NE).

According to ISO-NE, the organization responsible for managing the electrical grid and wholesale electricity markets in the six states of New England, "... complete electrification of the heating and transportation sectors and a near-exclusive reliance on wind, solar, and storage to generate electric power is possible, but involves **significant cost and unresolved reliability** concerns."^{vii}

It appears Ocean State lawmakers were willfully ignorant of the facts ... flying blind and setting unrealistic expectations ... with no plan to get there. To best serve the well-being of their constituents, elected and appointed officials must come to grips with actual research findings as well as the new reality of the dramatically altered federal landscape implemented by the 47th President of the United States ... **and re-craft a realistic state energy strategy.**

The Assault on RI Families ... and the environment

In our Center's fall 2024 report, *The Government's Assault on RI Families (#AssaultOnRIFamilies)*^{viii}, a major portion of the 'economic assault' section was focused on the Left's "war on energy"; and how that war negatively impacts families.

Important research recent from reports by New England's regional energy transmission company, the northeast energy coalition, and our Center include numerous sobering findings of our state's current path:

- Electricity rates in Rhode Island will rise to unaffordable levels, more than doubling in the coming decades; a result of the \$57 billion dollar investment that is required to meet future "Net Zero" energy demands
- Dangerous blackouts and/or brownouts are anticipated, which would put Ocean State residents at serious risk of not being able to access electricity during the coldest winter nights or hottest summer days
- The environmental damage from EVs and wind/solar farms has become increasingly clear to anyone taking an honest look ... from the mining and refining of toxic elements necessary for components, the poisonous breakdowns and disposal of such components, the wildlife and sea-life animals killed, habitat destruction, and the visual pollution of once pristine vistas.

Yet these practical and environmental harms have been ignored by green energy advocates and lawmakers.

Recommended Steps

Near Term. Instead of exacerbating the problems caused by its past and current energy policies, Rhode Island policymakers should reverse course and seek to become a regional pioneer in providing reliable and affordable energy for state residents.

There are two immediate steps that Rhode Island lawmakers can take to signal to the public they understand the grave issues associated with Rhode Island's current alternative energy strategy; **steps that other blue states have similarly taken**; and steps that would provide the space necessary for green or other alternative sources of energy to become reliable and market ready.

1. **Delay all green energy milestones.** Push back by at least 20 years all of Rhode Island's "Net Zero" energy milestone dates to allow time for alternative strategies to be more thoroughly evaluated
 - a. *New York's Climate Act will see a delay of its year 2030 70% renewable energy target, due to insufficient renewable project development, and compounded by expected loss of federal funding^{ix}*
2. **Immediately repeal RI's Electric Vehicle mandate;** a mandate which would place an insurmountable additional burden on our region's electric grid. Related, also withdraw from the CARB (*California Air Resources Board*) coalition. In light of the federal government's repeal of funding for the requisite EV charging infrastructure, as well as subsidies for EV purchases, it is clear that our state cannot go this path alone.
 - a. *In November 2023 the state of Connecticut withdrew from CARB's electric vehicle (mandate)^x*

Long Term. At a more comprehensive and long-term level, it is recommended that our state adopt a more realistic ***all-of-the-above energy strategy*** that would balance reliability, affordability, and sustainability by integrating diverse energy sources while minimizing environmental impacts.

The universally accepted fact that **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** will soon place significantly higher demands on our region's power grid, means that it must become a priority for lawmakers to unleash as much energy potential as possible ... as opposed to restricting that potential, as is the case with Rhode Island's current strategy.

America has reduced emissions by 20% without going 'full green'. One inconvenient, yet important truth is that the explosive growth of cheap and abundant natural gas as a power source is the primary reason the U.S. has been able to lead the world in reducing greenhouse gas emissions over the past decade. ^{xi} The lesson: heavy dependence on fossil fuel-based sources of energy does not necessarily add to unsafe levels of CO2 emissions.

Key elements of a credible and realistic long-term state energy strategy would include:

- **Natural Gas:** Work with regional partners to expand pipeline capacity, planning for natural gas to continue as the near- and mid-term primary source of power.
- **Nuclear:** remove restrictions on advanced nuclear technology (e.g., small modular reactors) for stable, low-carbon baseload power.

- **Regulatory:** review and relax related taxes, regulations, and building codes to ensure they are not overly costly or serve to reduce economic production and output.
- **Renewables:** expand wind, solar, and hydropower ... as they become more market, environment, and wildlife friendly.
- **Energy Storage:** monitor technological developments until battery and grid storage is market-ready and to able support renewables for more than just a few hours.
- **Grid Modernization:** more prudently invest in upgraded infrastructure for resilience and integration of distributed energy sources, avoiding the “sticker price shock” currently forecast.
- **Fossil Fuels:** strategically use coal and oil to maintain grid capacity, prioritizing cleaner processing, while maintaining energy security during the long-term transition to renewables as they become market ready.

This approach will maintain the well-being and quality of life for Ocean State residents, by ensuring a stable energy supply, reducing emissions, and supporting economic growth ... all while addressing cost, capacity, environmental, and wildlife concerns through proper due diligence, careful planning, and continued innovation.

Endnotes

ⁱ <https://www.golocalprov.com/news/RI-Energy-Head-Legislators-Are-Using-Inaccurate-Information-on-Costs-as>

ⁱⁱ https://www.mackinac.org/archives/2024/MCPP-NWU_Energy_Report_Card.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ According to *AlexAI*, research by climate expert Alex Epstein cited by his artificial intelligence tool

^{iv} <https://rifreedom.org/2024/11/freezing-in-the-dark/>

^v <https://www.rilegislature.gov/Special/comdoc/House%20Corporations%202024/03-21-2024--H7811--DPUC%20-%20Linda%20George.pdf>

^{vi} From RI Energy’s e-mail of 2/20/2025 “In this 15-year forecast, the DER inputs are driven more by current customer adoption trends than a direct tie to the state’s climate policy goals. This is because RIE has to strike the balance between preparing the system and affordability. Discussions are currently taking place to determine when and how RIE can incorporate potentially more aggressive adoption trends to better align with the state’s climate goals.”

^{vii} <https://www.iso-ne.com/static-assets/documents/100016/2024-epcet-report.pdf>

^{viii} <https://rifreedom.org/families/>

^{ix} <https://www.timesunion.com/news/article/report-n-y-miss-likely-miss-major-green-energy-19551094.php>

^x <https://www.courant.com/2023/11/27/democrats-concerned-about-having-votes-for-all-electric-cars-by-2035-as-controversy-grows/>

^{xi} <https://committeetounleashprosperity.com/hotlines/america-leads-the-world-in-reducing-greenhouse-gases/>