



RAILROAD COMMISSION OF TEXAS

Commissioner WAYNE CHRISTIAN

November 1, 2023

The Honorable Kevin Ellis
Chair
State Board of Education
P.O. Box 151453
Lufkin, TX 75915

Delivered via ellisSBOE@gmail.com

Re: Recommendations for SBOE's Proclamation 2024

Chairman Ellis:

I write regarding Proclamation 2024 and my concerns for potential textbooks that could promote a radical environmentalist agenda that would be a detriment to our students, state, and nation. As the State Board of Education (SBOE) is determining textbooks for Texas schools, I'd encourage the board to choose books that promote the importance of fossil fuels for energy production and reject books that promote a 'green energy' and net zero agenda.

Fossil fuels are a cheap, abundant, and reliable source of energy that if produced responsibly can give our country massive economic benefits and achieve energy independence. The oil and gas industry in Texas is a vital part of our state's economic lifeblood, generates baseload power for the electric grid, and provides numerous state resources for millions of Texans. And it's important that we teach our future generations the truth about natural resources and energy, where it all comes from, and how it works.

The importance of fossil fuels on human society cannot be understated, despite the best efforts of the 'keep-it-in-the-ground' advocates and the leftist media. Since the Industrial Revolution, fossil fuels have helped lift about a billion people out of poverty¹ and reduced climate-related deaths by 99%². They produce about 80% of U.S. and world energy³, increased food production by a factor of seven⁴, and help make 96% of the consumer-related products people rely on today⁵. Fossil fuels are a key ingredient in our success as Americans as they are what help build western democracies, win the world wars, facilitate modern medicine, enabled the technological revolution, put a man on the moon, and so much more.

¹ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/alexepstein/2015/01/14/how-opposition-to-fossil-fuels-hurts-the-poor-most-of-all/?sh=48d264d474ce>

² <https://www.wsj.com/articles/climate-activists-disasters-fire-storms-deaths-change-cop26-glasgow-global-warming-11635973538>

³ <https://www.eia.gov/energyexplained/us-energy-facts/>

⁴ <https://lifepowered.org/benefits-of-fossil-fuels-for-agricultural-production/>

⁵ <https://www.txoga.org/>

In fact, the United States is one of the largest producers of oil and gas in the world, producing a record 12.4 million barrels in 2019. In that same year, our country became a net exporter for energy for the first time in 67 years⁶, surpassing Saudi Arabia and Russia to become the world's largest producer⁷. This gave us affordable energy, thousands of new jobs, economic growth, and national security. It's an achievement that our country could easily accomplish again provided the public support and policy are behind it.

Moreover, Texas is the MVP of our nation for that production. The Lone Star State produces about 42% of the nation's crude oil and 27% of its natural gas⁸. If our state were its own nation, Texas would be the world's third largest producer of natural gas and fourth largest producer of oil⁹. Overall, the oil and gas industry—directly or indirectly—accounts for roughly 30% of the Texas economy¹⁰.

Texas' oil and gas industry is a world-class operation and with that level of economic activity comes tax dollars that make out state function. Texas oil and gas companies collectively paid \$24.7 billion in state and local taxes and royalty tax payments in 2022, exceeding \$203 billion in more than a decade¹¹. These funds support all aspects of the state economy and legislative budget, including infrastructure investment, water conservation programs, first responders, schools and education, and more. In fact, this money funds nearly all the Permanent University Fund and the Permeant School Fund with each receiving over \$2.1 billion last year.

I highlight these important metrics to demonstrate what's at stake. The United Nations, the World Economic Forum, President Joe Biden and the radical environmentalists all want to end fossil fuels forever, chasing an unrealistic goal of "carbon zero." The U.S. alone will be spending more than \$1.2 trillion taxpayer dollars¹², and counting, to subsidize wind/solar energies and 'mitigate' carbon emissions. Even though EPA regulated emissions are down about 80%¹³ over the half-century and Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) emissions are down about 13% in the last decade¹⁴.

All energy requires trade-offs, including wind and solar. The oil and gas industry, through technological advances, has done a superb job at solving the complex problems that come from production and emissions. So much so that radical environmentalists have run out of emissions to regulate. They've run out of reasons to justify shutting down oil and gas production, which is why they've turned to CO₂.

CO₂ is about .04% of the earth's atmosphere¹⁵. It's a naturally occurring element that makes all life possible. Climate catastrophists are using it to justify bad public policy that makes our energy less reliable, our economy worse off, and our nation less safe. Despite what the mainstream media reports, the debate over climate change is far from settled, as none of the catastrophic events they

⁶ <https://www.eia.gov/energyexplained/us-energy-facts/imports-and-exports.php>

⁷ <https://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.php?id=40973>

⁸ <https://www.eia.gov/state/?sid=TX>

⁹ https://kdhnews.com/news/texas/report-texas-oil-and-natural-gas-production-reaches-new-record-in-september/article_e33c5efd-faeb-5cff-b44a-e20141f3a88b.html#:~:text=Before%20again%20breaking%20its%20own,Texas%2C%20according%20to%20EIA%20data

¹⁰ <https://www.txoga.org/>

¹¹ <https://www.txoga.org/our-industry/economic-benefits/>

¹² <https://www.wsj.com/articles/inflation-reduction-act-subsidies-cost-goldman-sachs-report-5623cd29>

¹³ https://gispub.epa.gov/air/trendsreport/2021/#growth_w_cleaner_air

¹⁴ <https://www.eia.gov/environment/emissions/carbon/>

¹⁵ [https://netl.doe.gov/coal/carbon-storage/faqs/carbon-dioxide-101#:~:text=Carbon%20dioxide%20occurs%20naturally%20in,percent\)%20in%20the%20Earth's%20atmosphere.&text=Carbon%20dioxide%20is%20a%20minor%20part%20of%20the%20air%20that%20humans%20breathe](https://netl.doe.gov/coal/carbon-storage/faqs/carbon-dioxide-101#:~:text=Carbon%20dioxide%20occurs%20naturally%20in,percent)%20in%20the%20Earth's%20atmosphere.&text=Carbon%20dioxide%20is%20a%20minor%20part%20of%20the%20air%20that%20humans%20breathe)

¹⁵ [https://netl.doe.gov/coal/carbon-storage/faqs/carbon-dioxide-101#:~:text=Carbon%20dioxide%20occurs%20naturally%20in,percent\)%20in%20the%20Earth's%20atmosphere.&text=Carbon%20dioxide%20is%20a%20minor%20part%20of%20the%20air%20that%20humans%20breathe](https://netl.doe.gov/coal/carbon-storage/faqs/carbon-dioxide-101#:~:text=Carbon%20dioxide%20occurs%20naturally%20in,percent)%20in%20the%20Earth's%20atmosphere.&text=Carbon%20dioxide%20is%20a%20minor%20part%20of%20the%20air%20that%20humans%20breathe)

predicated in that last 20 years have occurred. These catastrophists are using the CO2 boogeyman and the threat of apocalypse to frighten people into submission.

And it's having an impact on society, as the popularity of being 'climate conscience' is trendy. About 60% of adults and kids have some anxiety about climate change¹⁶, and that's having an impact on the learning and types of careers our young people are interested in. For example, a *pwc* report claims that 14% of millennials said they would not want to work in the oil and gas industry because of its negative image¹⁷, and about 66% of teens think the industry is more harmful than good.

The industry, however, is one of the best to work for. In Texas, it employs about 350,000 people at an average salary of \$139,000—103% higher than other private sector jobs¹⁸. Many of these jobs are trade labor where skills can be acquired at a technical college, where tuition costs are much lower than traditional universities and the admissions requirements are easier to meet. At a time of record student loan debt for many, these are the kinds of degrees and jobs we should be encouraging future generations to obtain. This is how you build a strong middle-class economy.

In my experience, many people misunderstand the overall impact of the oil and gas industry on our state and world. Many view oil and gas as an antiquated energy source, a relic of the past that will soon be replaced with so-called "green" alternatives. However, when looking at our ever-growing need for energy, it quickly becomes very clear that fossil fuels are going to remain our primary source of energy for the foreseeable future. And that's not necessarily a bad thing—especially for Texas.

The Lone Star State needs a challenging, unbiased and real-world approach to educating our STEM students, preparing them for in-demand, high paying jobs. The last thing our state needs is a woke environmental agenda pushed by President Biden and former Vice President Al Gore teaching our kids to hate fossil fuels and that oil and gas is evil.

It's imperative that TEKS incorporates common sense and real-world needs into the K-8 science curriculum to ensure the prosperity of Texas' students.

Sincerely,



Wayne Christian
Commissioner
Railroad Commission of Texas

¹⁶ <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/climate-change-anxiety/#:~:text=The%20study%20also%20revealed%20how,they%20were%20sad%20and%20afraid.>

¹⁷ <https://www.pwc.com/co/es/publicaciones/assets/millennials-at-work.pdf>

¹⁸ <https://tipro.org/tipro-energy-report-2023/>