

Letter to the Editor

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Today I will start with a brief history lesson of solar, then I will tell you where I am going with this.

Information from The Smithsonian tells us it all began with Edmond Becquerel, a young physicist working in France, who in 1839 observed and discovered the photovoltaic effect. The first patent was filed in 1860 for the first solar powered engine and 1888 in the U.S. the first solar powered device. Charles Fritts created the first solar cell in 1883.

When the solar company tells you this is new technology which is going to save us all from ourselves, I want you to think again! This technology has been around for almost 200 years. The first industrial scale solar facility was built in 1983, 100 years after the first invention. It only lasted 11 years before being demolished.

I like to think about history, it wasn't my strong suit at school, couldn't memorize all those dates ad nauseum, but it didn't stop me enjoying it. Now I have lived this long I feel I am part of it and certainly see it in a different light, but I digress.

Getting to my point about this technology and the fact it has been around for so long, why has it not progressed like all our other advances in technology? The first solar cell had an efficiency rate of 1 percent some 100 years ago, now they have an efficiency of 18-20 percent, not a huge gain in all that time. Think about the advances in oil and gas and all that have given us this abundant world we live in. Think about the nuclear advances and what it has given us and the natural gas revolution, all giving us cheap energy. This has all happened in a short period of time and technology has made power plants more efficient and cleaner, though they can always do more. And somehow solar is the poor stepchild, it just hasn't performed.

Going back to history – 48 years ago Congress passed the Solar Energy Research, Development and Demonstration Act of 1974, “to make solar viable and affordable and market it to the public.” The federal

government began handing out grants and tax incentives for research and development for solar and the 2006 Investment Tax Credit brought corporations looking for more money. The Texas Ch 313 Economic Development Program was set up in 2002 and the renewable industry found it beneficial getting state money and local tax breaks. The job requirement, which was a big part of the program, was set aside by the school districts signing a waiver, instead of 10 rural jobs, only 1-2 jobs were created long term.

One of the largest factors playing into the economics of a solar farm is the rental rate that can be offered for a solar lease to the landowners and the state and local incentives, CH 313 and Ch 312, to renewable energy projects. The incentives also come in the form of Renewable Energy Credits (REC), Performance-based incentives (PBI) or Feed-In Tariff (FIT), as well as all the federal credits and incentives. To point out just how much this cost us, the well-known name you will recognize is Berkshire Hathaway Energy; in its latest filings according to an article by Robert Bryce, has collected about \$2.7 billion in tax credits over the last three years and Warren Buffet, the chairman and CEO famously said the “only reason” to build wind projects is to collect the PTC. This shows you just some of the scope of the Production Tax Credit program. Many of you may have heard of Solyndra and their debacle. This solar enterprise took billions of dollars in investor funds and \$535 million of taxpayer funds and then had to file bankruptcy. This solar panel manufacturer, among many others have gone belly up and the industry moved to China, where there are no regulations, no environment controls and forced and slave labor, who can compete with that? Who is to say they don't have an on-off switch embedded in the panels we buy from them? I have heard there have been spy devices implanted in the substations we bought from them! Now energy security is at risk. So, you see where all this history is leading. Solar technology has not led the charge, it is the tax incentives and grant programs handing out money that drives this industry. This program of throwing money at solar and wind will not solve our problems and will not make it affordable. The fallacy of thinking that if we build more it will work

better is ludicrous. We are paying for it twice, once through the tax man and then through our utility bill. Let's not pay for it a third time by having to clean it up after they are gone. This year since Dec 2021 alone, there have been over 23 million solar panels installed and now online. At \$2-\$3 each to send to a land fill (chances are they won't take them) or \$15-\$20 conservatively, to recycle (if they can find somewhere to do it), in five to 10 years there will be a huge problem and additional expense for solar companies or communities. Who knows what it will cost in the future.

Joanna Friebele

Landowner and tax payer