



## BLACKOUT bill: Minnesota lawmakers pass legislation banning use of coal, oil and gas for state's electricity grid

### Description

USA: BLACKOUT bill: Minnesota lawmakers pass legislation banning use of coal, oil and gas for state's electricity grid

The Minnesota House of Representatives on Thursday, Jan. 26, passed a Democrat-sponsored bill banning the use of coal, oil and gas for the state's electricity grid. The legislation is going to require the state's electricity grid to be 100 percent carbon-free in 17 years.

This coincided with President Joe Biden banning mining in the Iron Range, a Democrat-dominated working-class area in northeastern Minnesota. Republicans argued that the unrealistic timeline could endanger the lives of the citizens of the state if it fails while causing their electricity prices to soar.

GOP lawmakers were unsuccessful in proposing several amendments to the bill, including lifting the state's moratorium on new nuclear power plants, allowing for the use of carbon sequestration technologies and delaying the standard to consider its impact on child and slave labor in the green energy supply chain.

"Frankly, what this bill will be doing today is making Minnesota reliant on nations around the globe that have no labor standards and no environmental standards. Minnesota in this bill will build a clean grid economy on the backs of child slaves in China and poor environmental regulations in Indonesia and the Congo," Rep. Spencer Igo (R-Wabana Township) said at a press conference.

Igo pointed out that the resources to build a clean energy future are right in Minnesota's backyard, yet Biden's administration has already banned mining on 250,000 acres of the Iron Range.

"The third-largest deposits of copper, nickel, and cobalt that exist in the known world are only 250 miles north of this Capitol. Instead of investing in those resources ... we have decided to export it around the world where carbon emissions will be 20, 25 or 30 times higher than if we were to do it here in Minnesota," he added.

Rep. Anne Neu Brindley (R-North Branch) also argued that it took 29 years to reach roughly 20 percent carbon-free energy in the state.

“We want to make sure that in Minnesota we are never in a situation where we are having rolling blackouts because here in Minnesota that creates unsafe and dangerous environments,” Brindley said.

Republicans called the law the “blackout bill,” emphasizing that using wind and solar alone is unreliable.

## **GOP senators think the bill will be a disaster**

The bill passed on a vote of 70-60 and will now head to the Minnesota Senate, where Democrats hold a 34-33 advantage. However, Minnesotan Republican senators say the mandate will lead to higher electricity bills, grid reliability issues and the potential for power outages.

GOP Sen. Carla Nelson said it would be a “great disaster for a number of reasons.”

“Until we have the innovations to get there, and at a cost Minnesotans can afford, it’s going to be a problem. So, right now we don’t have the innovations, we don’t have the structure to get there. So, it’s maybe a good aspirational goal, but probably not a goal that’s doable right now,” Nelson said.

She added that the legislation would require utilities to increase the amount of their electricity generated from renewable energy sources, including wind, solar and hydropower, to 55 percent by 2035.

A controversial aspect of the said bill is what happens if a utility can’t actually get to 100 percent carbon-free energy by 2040. Annie Levenson-Falk, executive director of the Citizens Utility Board, told lawmakers at a recent House hearing that she is confident utilities can climb above 90 percent clean energy without risking reliability or increasing costs. Moving too slowly toward carbon-free power might even raise power bills more in the long run, she said.

Princeton Sen. Andrew Mathews, who leads the Senate’s Energy, Utilities, Environment, and Climate Committee, said he still views it more as an “activist bill” rather than a “good governance bill,” highlighting that power rates have gone up too quickly already. Thus, he urged lawmakers to change the bill so that the standards would automatically be swept aside if the state experiences significant blackouts.

By Belle Carter

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