

LNG Export Ban Is Atrocious Politics for Democrats

It's bad policy and a betrayal of working-class voters who are crucial to Biden's re-election.

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Many climate activists are celebrating the Biden administration's decision to curtail exports of liquefied natural gas. The policy, however, is a political misstep and not only for the reasons most critics give. For a moment, set aside the national-security implications—that limiting American exports will punish our allies around the world—and the concern that this decision may spur European and Asian countries to burn more

coal. By picking at a cultural scab some of us in the Democratic Party have worked to heal, the policy also risks alienating key voting blocs from [Joe Biden's](#) campaign and climate policy writ large.

This is a political challenge I know personally. When I used to make my weekly journey from Youngstown, Ohio, to Pittsburgh on my way to Washington, I passed an enormous “cracker plant” being constructed off the expressway—a facility that processed ethane and other components of the natural gas being extracted from Appalachian shale formations. As a Democratic congressman, I looked on with hope and pride: Our region was creating well-paying union jobs in an industry that was fighting climate change by retiring coal in favor of cleaner gas.

What those celebrating the LNG export pause don't understand is that the people working in that cracker plant, as well as the voters who thrived in the fracking boom, aren't all climate-change deniers, which I discovered through conversations with constituents. Though they once resisted the idea that the climate is changing, many told me that they now believe in climate change and agree that extractive and energy-producing industries do need to change and become cleaner. The employees at that cracker plant rightly saw their work as their contribution to progress. The natural gas they were pulling out of the ground was supposed to replace dirty coal and nurture clean-energy businesses in the region. They had gone from being labeled as part of the problem to part of the solution—and they were proud.

Now, liberal Washington is turning on them. It seems that the clean natural gas that was, until a minute ago, extolled as a great climate salve has become a scourge. A technology that was getting cleaner thanks to Mr. Biden, an industry that was supposed to wean the world off coal, is now being discussed by climate activists as though it might be worse than coal. Natural gas is a crucial bridge to a clean-energy future, but with so many environmentalists cheering the new Biden policy, it's almost impossible for American workers not to conclude that Democrats have moved the goal posts.

Those of us who are committed to slowing climate change should consider the political implications of this bait-and-switch. This policy will hurt the president with working-class voters, threatening Mr. Biden's re-election prospects. The worst climate policy by far is one that would result in four more years of President [Donald Trump](#).

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