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U.S. Investment in Clean Energy Production Is a Must


By [Daniel Becker \(/topics/author/daniel_becker\)](/topics/author/daniel_becker) and [James Gerstenzang \(/topics/author/james_gerstenzang\)](/topics/author/james_gerstenzang)

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What do we get for the government's investment in green energy? A stronger economy, competitive industries, and, of course, a leg up against global warming pollution.

And if the government gives up? More oil wars, more pollution, and a continuing addiction to fossil fuels.

In short, U.S. investment in new, clean energy production and advanced transportation—whether wind and solar power or efficient cars—is imperative.

For already-delivered benefits, look to the nearest roadway. Ten years ago, tax incentives encouraged consumers to buy the new hybrid cars that automakers were just introducing to American drivers. Now, thanks to incentives, hybrids—while far from ubiquitous—are increasingly common on the nation's roads.

[[See a collection of political cartoons on energy policy.](#)

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In coming years, hybrids are expected to build their share of the market to become a majority of the new cars and trucks. They will get a boost from the government's strong mileage and emissions standards, which set automakers on a path toward vehicles that will be cleaner and cheaper to drive.

It's all about good choices and smart investments. A George W. Bush administration program funnels \$25 billion directly to automakers and suppliers to support production of such clean, advanced-technology cars as plug-in hybrids and electric vehicles, and the batteries on which they rely.

But if we step away from the challenge, we'll cede a once-thriving American auto industry to even stronger foreign competition than it faces today. If you don't believe us, just ask the homegrown entrepreneurs who are struggling to compete with China's solar industry.

Certainly not every government program that has invested in green energy has borne fruit. But critics are wrongly citing Solyndra as a reason to quash government support for any form of energy they oppose.

[[Check out the U.S. News Energy Intelligence blog.](#) (<http://www.usnews.com/energy-intelligence>)]

Meanwhile, those who attack subsidies for new technologies are silent about tens of billions of dollars that prop up the coal, oil, gas, and nuclear industries. Subsidies for these mature technologies? Yes. Aren't depletion allowances, royalties, and plain old preferential capital gains treatment subsidies? Take the nuclear industry. Private insurers won't. So, it relies on the government for insurance. Handouts all. Where's the outrage?

Without subsidies helping green industry today, consider the options for tomorrow: Our

advanced-technology cars and trucks will come from China—or we will rely on increasingly aging systems built by an uncompetitive GM, Ford, or Chrysler. Would you buy a car today that hasn't been improved since 1997?

The same goes for energy production. What worked to get hybrid cars off the starting line can work for wind and solar power now. Our children's futures depend on it.

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