

THE ENERGY MESSAGE

By **Bill Keffer** - December 3, 2021



As part of our Energy Law Program at Texas Tech University School of Law, we present an Energy Law Lecture Series. We bring in three guest speakers every semester who lecture on important energy-related topics. Since we started in 2014, among an impressive list of speakers, our lecture series has included: Russell Gold, formerly with the Wall Street Journal now with Texas Monthly and author of "The Boom" and "Superpower;" Carlos Ortiz, Ministry of Energy with Mexico; Corey Goulet, TransCanada — Keystone XL pipeline; Alex Epstein, author of "The Moral Case for Fossil Fuels"; Texas State Representative Drew Darby, Chair of the House Energy Resources Committee; Texas Railroad Commissioners Christi Craddick and Wayne Christian; Phelim McAleer, producer of the film "FrackNation;" Todd Staples, former Texas State Representative, former Texas State Senator, former Texas Commissioner of Agriculture, and President of the Texas Oil & Gas Association; Allen Gilmer, former Chairman of the Texas Independent Producers and Royalty Owners Association and

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University; Robert Bryce, author, lecturer, and producer of the film "Juice: How Electricity Explains the World;" Scott Tinker, Director of the Texas Bureau of Economic Geology and producer of the films "Switch" and "Switch On;" Kirk Edwards, President and CEO of Latigo Petroleum; and Kathleen Sgamma, President of the Western Energy Alliance.

This Fall, we hosted John and Keith Davis. John is a former Texas State Representative and board member of Conservative Texans for Energy Innovation. His brother Keith is a long-time attorney in Abilene. They discussed the negotiation of a wind lease on family ranch land they own in Concho County. We also had Jack and Elizabeth Ames Coleman. Jack has extensive experience in national energy policy from his many years working in the U.S. Capitol, and Elizabeth is a former Texas State Representative and Texas Railroad Commissioner when her name was Elizabeth Ames Jones.

Our final guest speaker for the Fall semester was Mark Mathis. He previously spoke to the law school in the Fall of 2015. On both occasions, in addition to his lecture, we screened one of his energy film documentaries at the local Alamo Draft House to an audience consisting of students and members of the community.

Mathis is a former television news journalist. He later became a media consultant and developed an interest in, and then passion for, the topic of energy policy and how it was being covered by the mainstream media. As a result, he raised private funding for the production of two feature-length film documentaries on energy called "spOILed" and "Fractured." He also founded and currently runs an organization called the Clear Energy Alliance, which produces short, five-minute videos on various energy-related topics.

On his recent visit, we screened Mathis's film called "Fractured."

Admittedly, this film was released in 2015, so it was already six years

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advantage of his visit and the novelty of being able to watch a film produced by our guest speaker.

As it turned out, the message in the film is still very relevant, and it could have easily passed as a current release. The bias against fossil fuels has only increased, the excessive embrace of renewable energy is only more fervent, and the dismissive attitude towards the inevitable ramifications of such a policy has only become more pervasive. Some of the admonitions in the film even point to the very scenario we witnessed in February and the winter storm that shut down half of the Texas electricity grid.

Perhaps the most surprising and reassuring part of that evening at the movie theater was the audience's reaction to the film as the credits started to roll. As a law-school professor, who regularly witnesses the attitudes of students towards current events and matters related to energy policy, I was not sure how these students might react to a film that delivered such a blunt message. Anticipating an awkward silence between the end of the film and the question-and-answer session with Mathis to follow, I instead witnessed spontaneous, robust applause from the audience in response to what they had just watched.

In speaking to several audience members afterward, it became clear that their positive response was validation that there is likely a significant percentage of the population in Texas and the U.S. that intuitively understands and agrees with the message in a film like "Fractured" and is increasingly frustrated that the message is being routinely quashed by leaders in government, media and academia. Perhaps this ignored segment of the U.S. population is this generation's "silent majority" on the verge of rising up to reject the path we have been on with respect to energy policy.

We are now starting to feel the consequences of a forced economic policy that is premised more on a desire for control and an arrogance

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economic reality. When confronted with the choice between mandated virtue-signaling by government elites or affordable, reliable, accessible energy capable of supporting the demands and expectations of our modern, technological society — is there really any question what Americans will choose?

Mathis is only one voice, his film documentaries have reached only a limited audience, and his short videos on energy topics do not get shared and forwarded like “Let’s Go Brandon” memes and swimsuit photos of Britney Spears and Kim Kardashian, but there is a market with whom his message about energy reality and the dangers of energy fantasy resonates. The people in that market are desperately looking for that message and leaders that are willing to embrace it and finally pronounce that the anti-fossil fuels movement should be depicted as the fabled emperor, who is wearing no clothes but instead has been deluded into believing his regal robes of wind and sunshine can provide sufficient cover.

At Texas Tech University School of Law, we teach our students what is happening in the real world and equip them with the tools they will need, so they will be ready to hit the ground running; but we do not pretend that oil and natural gas can somehow be replaced anytime soon — in fact, we celebrate how these natural resources have helped make us the greatest nation in world history.

If you would like to be added to our email list, let me know at william.keffer@ttu.edu.

About the author: Bill Keffer is a contributing columnist to SHALE Oil & Gas Business

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