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Faced With Opposition to “Green” Energy, Democrat-run States Usurp Local Authority

Democrat-dominated states are centralizing authority over so-called green-energy projects to prevent local governments whose constituents object to such projects from standing in their way.

The [Daily Caller](#) reports:

Michigan, California, New York and Illinois have all passed legislation that consolidates authority over land use issues and rules with state-level bureaucrats at the expense of local governments that could have altered their own zoning codes to stem the tide of industrial green projects like solar and wind farms. These policies deprive rural residents in these states of their freedom and local autonomy, while also benefiting the corporate interests that line the pockets of the states’ Democratic governors, state policy experts and lawmakers told the Daily Caller News Foundation [DCNF].



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Many of these green-energy projects are highly subsidized. The 2022 Inflation Reduction Act includes almost \$400 billion in new spending and tax breaks designed to encourage such projects. California Policy Center senior fellow Edward Ring told the DCNF that the law “is one of the biggest gifts of money to corporations that we have ever seen in this country.”

With so much cash on the line, companies have a strong incentive to see that their projects are unhindered. By contributing heavily to Democrats who share their enthusiasm for “green” energy — all four states are aiming for 100-percent carbon-free energy production over the next two to three decades — they can ensure that their plans aren’t scuttled by recalcitrant residents who dislike both the appearance of solar and wind farms and their costly, unreliable output.

Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer signed her state’s green-energy policy into law three weeks ago. According to the Daily Caller:

One of the bills Whitmer signed ... specifically allows the Michigan Public Services Commission, the state’s utility regulatory body overseen by officials appointed by the governor, to exercise permitting authority for large green energy projects rather than leaving zoning discretion to the municipal governments. Several local opposition campaigns



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in more rural locales across the state were able to hinder major green energy developments in their communities, but the new law could make similar grassroots success in the future effectively impossible.

Not surprisingly, utility company DTE Energy, through a nonprofit organization, contributed [\\$2 million](#) to Democrats in 2022 and directly gave over [\\$400,000](#) to groups that supported Whitmer in the 2018 gubernatorial election. “Additionally, since 2021, Whitmer-affiliated political funds have raked in more than \$100,000 in campaign cash from environmentalist organizations that support the green energy transition,” pens the Daily Caller.

Whitmer’s actions “very clearly advance the interests of monopoly utilities, big wind and solar developers and extreme environmental groups over the interests of local communities and rural Michiganders,” Jason Hayes, director of energy and environmental policy for the Michigan-based Mackinac Center for Public Policy, told the DCNF. “Put another way, these bills protect the profits of politically favored and heavily subsidized wind and solar developers, while sacrificing the rights and interests of the communities that will have to endure the wind turbines and solar arrays developers want to build.”

Led by “self-proclaimed environmentalist” Governor Gavin Newsom, California “passed a law in June 2022 that enables state bureaucrats to bypass local restrictions in order to permit large-scale green energy projects,” writes the Daily Caller. Newsom, too, “has received considerable financial support from interests that ostensibly stand to benefit from a rapid buildout of green energy projects in the state. Between his 2018 and 2022 gubernatorial campaigns, Newsom received more than \$340,000 from green energy trade groups, political action committees and executives, according to state campaign finance records reviewed by the DCNF.”

The Empire State, under then-Governor Andrew Cuomo, established the Office of Renewable Energy Siting (ORES) in 2020. According to the [law](#) that created the agency, ORES “may elect not to apply, in whole or in part, any local law or ordinance ... if it makes a finding that ... it is unreasonably burdensome” to realizing the state’s energy objectives. Since 2018, Cuomo and his successor, Governor Kathy Hochul, have accepted \$270,000 from “green energy companies, trade groups and executives, as well as relevant unions and their political action committees,” notes the Daily Caller.

Ken Girardin, research director for the New York-based Empire Center for Public Policy, told the DCNF that most of the green-energy projects would be built in rural areas that already get largely carbon-free energy. Furthermore, he said, “New York’s land-use policies and practices are far from perfect, but these are projects that wouldn’t be coming to [these] areas if it weren’t for considerable public subsidies.”

The story is much the same in Illinois, where Governor J.B. Pritzker in January signed a law that “prevents counties from enacting preemptive local ordinances that outright ban local wind and solar projects, hindering the state’s new climate goals,” according to a celebratory [press release](#) from the Illinois Environmental Council.

“These new energy companies, many of which are owned by large, out-of-state venture capital firms receiving massive tax breaks, are now able to remove local control against the wishes of the community,” Republican Illinois state Senator Terri Bryant told the DCNF. “This bill is especially dangerous in heavily agricultur[al] counties that have limited zoning and large spaces of land used for crops.”



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The Democratic Party long ago gave up any claim to being the party of the “little guy.” These days, it is the party that imposes an unscientific, far-left ideology on the little guy — especially when doing so reaps handsome profits.



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