



DEBUNKED: The Danish “20 Percent” Wind Energy Canard Widely Used Among Cap-and-Tax Backers Simply False

As the debate over cap-and-trade continues, advocates of rationing Americans’ energy – including the president – continue to cite Denmark as an example to be followed for the United States, stating on several occasions that the Danes supply a full 20% of their domestic electricity needs via wind.

Thanks, though, to several experts in Denmark, these claims have been flatly disproved. Below is a sampling of claims about Denmark’s wind energy, and the facts that disprove them.

CLAIMS

President Barack Obama

- “**Denmark produces almost 20 percent of their electricity through wind power.** We pioneered solar technology, but we’ve fallen behind countries like Germany and Japan in generating it, even though we’ve got more sun than either country.” (“Transcript: Obama’s Earth Day Speech,” [4/22/09](#))
- “Now, in comparison, **Denmark produces almost 20 percent of their electricity through wind power,**’ Mr. Obama said.” (“Obama Urges Passage of Energy Legislation,” The New York Times, [4/22/09](#))

U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT), a self-professed socialist

- “Denmark scaled up its production of renewable energy so that now wind power **provides nearly 20 percent of its electricity.**” (Remark at the “Embassy of Denmark’s ‘The Road to Copenhagen – Challenges and Opportunities for Businesses at the Next UN Climate Conference,” [5/20/09](#))
- “In Denmark, for example, **20 percent of their electricity is produced by wind.**” (U.S. Senate Floor Speech, [11/13/07](#))

U.S. Congressman Bill Delahunt (D-MA)

- “Today, European companies in Germany and **Denmark are well ahead of us** in developing this new industry.” (Official Website, accessed [9/10/09](#))

Energy Information Administration (EIA)

- “Denmark ranks ninth in the world in wind power capacity, but generates about **20% of its electricity from wind.**” (“Wind Basics,” Official Website, accessed [9/10/09](#))

Seeking Alpha’s [Jeff Wilson](#)

- “By 2007, Denmark was getting about **20% of its electricity from wind.** As an existing power company integrating wind, it has enough conventional generation to supply demand any time the wind isn’t blowing.” (“Wind Power: What We Can Learn from Denmark,” Seeking Alpha, [11/26/09](#))

FACT

Independent Danish think tank CEPOS

- **"The claim that Denmark derives about 20% of its electricity from wind overstates matters. Being highly intermittent, wind power has recently (2006) met as little as 5% of Denmark's annual electricity consumption with an average over the last five years of 9.7%."**
- "The exported wind power, paid for by Danish householders, brings **material benefits** in the form of cheap electricity and delayed investment in new generation equipment for consumers in Sweden and Norway but **nothing for Danish consumers. Taxes and charges on electricity for Danish household consumers make their electricity by far the most expensive in the European Union (EU).**"
- "In the long run, creating additional employment in one sector through subsidies will detract labor from other sectors, resulting in no increase in net employment but only in a shift from the non-subsidized sectors to the subsidized sector. Allowing for the theoretical possibility of wind employment alleviating possible regional pockets of high unemployment, a very optimistic ballpark estimate of net real job creation is 10% of total employment in the sector. In this case the **subsidy per job created is 600,000-900,000 DKK per year (\$90,000-140,000)**. This subsidy constitutes around 175-250% of the average pay per worker in the Danish manufacturing industry."
- "In terms of value added per employee, **the energy technology sector over the period 1999-2006 underperformed by as much as 13% compared with the industrial average.**"
- "This implies that the effect of the government subsidy has been to shift employment from more productive employment in other sectors to less productive employment in the wind industry. As a consequence, **Danish GDP is approximately 1.8 billion DKK (\$270 million) lower than it would have been if the wind sector work force was employed elsewhere.**" ("Wind Energy: The Case of Denmark," [9/09](#))

FactCheck.org

- **"Don't expect wind power to replace coal as the nation's main source of electric power**, whatever Obama's interior secretary said."
- "Interior Secretary Salazar said that the amount of "developable" wind power off the East Coast could produce more energy than all the coal-fired electric plants in the U.S., and that wind's potential to replace most of our coal power "is a very real possibility." **We find his claims to be wildly optimistic, to say the least.**"
- "But what would it take to go beyond 20 percent, and replace all the coal-fired plants that now account for nearly half the nation's electricity? And to do that using only wind farms in waters off the U.S. East Coast? The highest-producing offshore wind turbine installation in operation, Nysted Wind Farm in Denmark, has 72 turbines and a capacity of 165.6 megawatts. Assuming that 40 percent of that capacity can actually be realized, we figure those turbines put out an average of about 66 megawatt hours in an hour. Producing enough power to account for all of what is now put out by coal-fired plants in the U.S. would require 3,540 installations of that size, comprising well over 250,000 individual turbines." ("Hot Air on Wind Energy," FactCheck.org, [4/10/09](#))