Coal Op-eds: 310 YTD

- August 1: FIA Magazine (Ohio)
- August 4: Wheeling Intelligencer (W.Va.)
- August 6: Frankfort State Journal (Ky.)
- August 7: Kansas City Star (Kans.)
- August 7: Miami Herald (Fla.)
- August 7: Lexington Herald Leader (Ky.)
- August 7: Idaho Statesman (Idaho)
- August 7: Raleigh News & Observer (N.C.)
- August 7: Tacoma News Tribune (Wash.)
- August 7: Sacramento Bee (Calif.)
- August 7: DC Journal (D.C.)
- August 7: Centre Daily Times (Pa.)
- August 7: Roane County News (Tenn.)
- August 7: Belleville News Democrat (Ill.)
- August 7: Biloxi Sun Herald (Miss.)
- August 7: Brunswick News (Ga.)
- August 7: Fort Worth Star-Telegram (Texas)
- August 7: Myrtle Beach Sun News (S.C.)
- August 8: Boston Herald (Mass.)
- August 8: The Post Star (N.Y.)
- August 8: Quad City Times (Iowa)
- August 8: The Roanoke Times (Va.)
- August 8: Omaha World-Herald (Neb.)
- August 8: Billings Gazette (Mont.)
- August 8: Wisconsin State Journal (Wis.)
- August 8: Casper Star Tribune (Wyo.)
- August 8: Press of Atlantic City (N.J.)
- August 8: Opelika-Auburn News (Ala.)
- August 8: St. Louis Post-Dispatch (Mo.)
- August 8: Albany Democrat Herald (Ore.)
- August 8: Bismarck Tribune (N.D.)
- August 8: Bedford Gazette (Pa.)
- August 8: Elko Daily Free Press (Nev.)
- August 8: Northwest Indiana Times (Ind.)
- August 8: Rapid City Journal (S.D.)
- August 8: Tucson Daily Star (Ariz.)
- August 8: Tulsa World (Okla.)
- August 8: Winona Daily News (Minn.)
- August 10: Albuquerque Journal (N.M.)
- August 13: Washington Times (D.C.)
- August 27: DC Journal (D.C.)
- August 27: The Daily Courier (Pa.)

- August 27: Heartland Newsfeed (USA)
- August 28: Boston Herald (Mass.)
- August 29: Kearney Hub (Neb.)
- September 2: Charleston Gazette-Mail (W.Va.)
- September 3: Huntington Herald Dispatch (W.Va.)
- September 4: Real Clear Energy (D.C.)

The Washington Times
America's Newspaper

Coal plants step up when renewables falter during record-breaking electricity demand
Rich Nolan
August 13, 2025

In the last week of July, power demand in the lower 48 states set two all-time records. Across much of the country, this has been a summer of alarmingly thin margins for our power supply.

On the PJM grid — the nation's largest, with 67 million customers — operators issued nine emergency alerts through the end of July. Last summer, it was just one. Operators have faced the same challenges on the Midcontinent Independent System Operator grid next door. They have been forced to issue multiple maximum generation alerts, calling on every megawatt of generating capacity to meet demand while needing gigawatts of electricity imports to keep the lights on and air conditioning running.

As this summer has demonstrated, and as recent electricity capacity market results have underscored, the nation urgently needs more dispatchable generating capacity and must keep every megawatt of existing capacity available and operating.

Again and again, during peak power demand in winter and summer months, dispatchable power — coal, natural gas and nuclear power plants — shoulder the burden. Notably, coal capacity has played an outsize role this summer in meeting demand and holding electricity prices in check.

On the MISO grid, coal generation has eclipsed year prior totals for eight straight months. In July, it jumped 17% from a year earlier, meeting rising power demand but also taking market share from higher-priced natural gas and renewable generation, which were waning because of uncooperative weather.

As testament to coal's importance, look no further than the remarkable case study of the J.H. Campbell coal plant in Michigan. Although it was slated for closure at the end of May because of state regulatory pressure, Secretary of

Energy Chris Wright invoked emergency authority to extend the life of the plant to bolster the region's supply of power.

Although Mr. Wright's order ensured the plant's availability this summer, how often it ran and how much power it produced would be totally dependent on need and economics. With data now available for plant operations through June, it's clear the plant has been a reliability backstop.

The plant's capacity factor for the month, a measure of its production against its maximum possible output, was 66%, remarkably high. During a brutal heat wave in late June, when power supplies for the region were tightest, the plant surged more than a gigawatt of capacity onto the grid. For comparison, the entire 30 GWs of wind capacity on the MISO grid has at times produced little more.

The Trump administration has taken a deeply welcome and pragmatic approach to the coal fleet. Rather than a problem that must be solved, the Trump administration has embraced the fleet as an answer to the nation's startling grid reliability challenge, now compounded by the emergence of soaring electricity demand.

A leading consultancy expects U.S. power demand to jump an incredible 25% by 2030 and nearly 80% by 2050, driven by electrification and the artificial intelligence revolution. In regions where data center development is most concentrated, demand will jump even higher and faster.

Although building generating capacity and the infrastructure needed to support it, both transmission lines and pipelines, will be essential, meeting so much new demand so fast will require getting more power from the capacity we already have.

If the U.S. is to seize the AI moment and ensure this technology is developed under American safeguards, electricity availability is key.

The coal fleet is uniquely positioned to meet the moment.

Although nuclear power plants already run at full capacity and gas plants are constrained by pipeline availability and gas heating demand during winter months, the coal fleet has the spare capacity and fuel security to ramp up generation to fill much of the gulf emerging between available power supply and projected demand.

The U.S. has the needed generating capacity to win the AI race. We must now embrace the coal solution hiding in plain sight.

Point: Coal Needs to Be Part of America's Energy Future
Syd Peng
August 7, 2025

There is no disputing it: coal isn't disappearing.

Despite reports of coal's demise, global coal use hit a record in 2024. Since the turn of the century, coal demand has doubled.

The world needs a new political discourse on coal. This is not a fuel that is going to be phased out or a technology left behind. Its importance to energy security and energy affordability is growing.

The misguided idea that the West would lead the developing world away from coal needs to be put to bed. Europe's attempted dash to renewable power has left it energy insecure and home to the world's highest electricity prices. While Europe struggles with deindustrialization, Asia is leaning on coal to tackle energy poverty and industrialize. Nowhere is that truer than in China.

While 37 countries are planning coal power projects, China is the elephant in the room. China produces and uses more coal than the rest of the world combined. It consumes 40 percent more coal than the rest of the world.

Despite pressure to halt its coal use, China isn't replacing or closing any of its existing coal capacity. China is building another 100 GW of new coal capacity, its highest level of new construction in a decade. China's coal fleet is more than six times the size of the United States.

India, too, is leaning on coal to drive its economy and its effort to bring energy to millions without it. India's annual coal demand is now double the United States' and is growing rapidly.

Those who disparage the use of coal ignore the enormous demand for electricity from the 800 million people, mainly in Asia and Africa, who live in the dark and suffer from chronic malnutrition. Half of the world's population has no access to sanitary toilets. Electricity-driven economic development can solve these problems. Access to electricity reduces infant mortality, improves sanitation, extends life expectancy and fosters educational opportunities. Coal remains the key answer to persistent energy poverty.

Those who tend to look down their noses at coal forget that coal plants continue to play a critical role in the United States, underpinning a diverse and balanced energy mix to meet growing demand for electricity from data centers, electric cars and heat pumps.

The rapid adoption of AI and the growth of data centers are projected to increase U.S. electricity demand by 25 percent in the next five years and nearly 80 percent by 2050. With demand skyrocketing, and immense and persistent challenges facing additions of new baseload power generation, the power plants already connected to the grid will be more critical than ever. The existing coal fleet, with generating capacity to spare, may well be the lynchpin to allowing the United States to win the AI race, a race China is running on coal.

Coal is here to stay. It's far past time we plan for it. Along with making far better use of our existing coal fleet, we must also pioneer advanced coal technology.

More efficient, more flexible and lower-emission coal plants are the future. We should be modeling and building them here. With U.S. electricity demand soaring, we're going to need an actual all-of-above approach to affordably and reliably meet it. With the United States the home to the world's largest coal reserves, it would be energy policy malpractice not to make advanced coal technology a centerpiece of the effort.

Author

- Syd S. Peng

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FA magazine

COAL IS THE NEW BRIDGE FUEL
Bernard Weinstein
August 2025

Once again, the consensus of government and private weather forecasters is that this coming summer will witness above-average temperatures in most parts of the United States. Already, warnings have been sounded that America's power grids will be under great stress—as has been the case for a

number of years—with a strong probability of blackouts and brownouts in some parts of the country. For example, the North American Electric Reliability Corporation's (NERC) summer reliability assessment published on May 18 cited the 15-state Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO) as the regional grid most likely to see a meltdown this summer.

NERC's warning proved to be prescient. On May 25, more than 100,000 customers in and around New Orleans lost power for most of the day when electricity demand exceeded supply, despite an emergency order from the Department of Energy several days earlier to keep a 1,560 megawatt coal plant in Michigan on-line that was slated for closure by the end of May. ERCOT, the Texas grid operator, has also warned of possible outages this summer due to potential low solar and wind energy availability during peak demand.

The strains on America's power grids are easy to explain. After remaining relatively flat for a decade, electricity demand is now projected to jump 50% over the next 10 years. Investments in server farms, artificial intelligence, crypto-mining, and a revival of manufacturing activity account for most of this growth. For example, a recent study by the Berkeley National Laboratory found that data centers consumed 4% of total U.S. electricity in 2023 but will account for 12% of power demand by 2028.

At the same time, construction of new base-load power plants—natural gas, nuclear, and coal—has plummeted. Driven by federal, state, and local tax incentives, wind and solar have accounted for the lion's share of new installed generation in recent years. The problem, of course, is that these power sources are intermittent, which is why New Orleans lost electricity in May and why the Iberian Peninsula suffered a blackout in April.

Although several states—most notably Texas—have adopted programs to encourage new construction of natural gas plants, for the near term it's critical to keep the nation's remaining coal plants online.

Since 2010, 300 "always on" coal-fired power plants have been closed, reducing its share of generation from 45% to 16% nationwide. Only about 200 remain on the regional grids today.

The Trump administration has taken several steps to enhance power grid reliability and resiliency by keeping these coal plants on-line, including a series of executive orders signed by the President in early April. One of these orders allows a number of aging coal plants slated for closure to continue producing power.

Not surprisingly, these actions have energized environmentalists who remain committed to shuttering the remaining coal fleet and banning the construction of any new fossil fuel power plants. But the renewables-or-nothing approach they favor is crashing into a new energy reality. Not only is power demand poised to surge but building and connecting wind and solar plants, as well as the infrastructure needed to integrate them into the grid, is proving increasingly costly and challenging. Coupled with higher interest rates and supply chain challenges, local opposition to wind and solar farms, as well as new transmission lines, is having a significant impact on the speed and scale at which new generation is entering service.

The era of tearing down existing, well-operating power plants before reliable replacement capacity is built and connected to the grid is over. The on-demand power plants already in service are more valuable than ever. While coal's long-term future remains in question, its near-term importance is clear. Our existing fleet of coal plants can help us manage the transition to a more reliable and resilient energy future as we build the next generation of base-load resources.

Bernard L. Weinstein is retired associate director of the Maguire Energy Institute at Southern Methodist University, professor emeritus of applied economics at the University of North Texas, and a fellow of Goodenough College, London.

Want to Bring Down Electricity Prices and Shore up the Grid? Try Energy Pragmatism
Terry Jarrett
August 27, 2025

Since 2020, electricity prices have been steadily rising. And since 2022, they've increased at twice the rate of inflation. Consumers are right to be frustrated. With oil prices falling, electricity prices have emerged as the key energy pain point for families and the target for aggressive energy policy.

Bringing down electricity prices is now a priority, but Americans shouldn't lose sight of the other critical challenge now facing the nation's supply of electricity: rapidly eroding grid reliability.

In regional electricity grids nationwide, the supply of power is in danger of being overwhelmed by demand, especially during peak periods such as scorching summer days and deep winter freezes. Last December, the nation's top grid reliability regulator, the North American Electric Reliability

Corp., reported that more than half of the country faces blackout risks over the next decade due to capacity shortfalls.

We've already seen the warning signs. The nation's largest electricity grid — PJM Interconnection, which manages the supply of power for 67 million customers stretching from Washington, D.C. to Chicago — issued nine emergency alerts through July when power demand threatened available supply. Last summer, it issued one.

New industrial activity, electric vehicles and the data centers underpinning the AI revolution are gobbling up a tremendous amount of electricity. And that's making the grid reliability challenge more urgent. New demand is accumulating so fast — and at such unexpected levels — that utilities are struggling to add generating capacity, essential pipelines and transmission lines fast enough to meet it.

To get a sense of the scale of the challenge, Meta — the technology company behind Facebook and Instagram — is building a data center complex in Louisiana that will eventually consume more power than the entire state of Nevada. The sprawling complex has gone from concept to construction overnight. It's scheduled to launch next year. But Meta is just one tech giant competing in the AI race.

Nationwide, dozens of enormous data centers are planned, each with the electricity needs of entire cities, and sometimes entire states.

Soaring electricity demand and constrained supply are a recipe for rising prices. For much of the country, the electricity price problem is likely to get worse before it gets better. The same is true for reliability. There are answers.

High electricity prices are incentivizing new generating capacity. Developers are planning to bring online a record 64 gigawatts of power capacity this year — more than half of which will be solar power. That amount of power is enough to meet the electricity needs of 40 million homes. The previous high-water mark for capacity additions was set in 2002, when developers added 58 GW to the grid.

New capacity additions are critically important, but the other half of the equation is keeping what's currently operating online. That may sound obvious, but it's the opposite strategy pursued by the Biden administration.

The Biden regulatory agenda sought to wipe out the U.S. coal fleet at the very moment the nation was facing surging power demand and alarming warnings over grid reliability. The Trump administration has reversed course.

Given a regulatory reprieve, utilities are putting the brakes on coal plant closures. More than 40 coal plants have seen their retirement dates pushed back or cancelled altogether.

The answer to our electricity price and reliability challenges is abundance. Keeping the generating capacity already on the grid operating is just as critical as adding new capacity. Power plant additions should come on the shoulders of what's already in place. That's how we'll meet new demand. Otherwise, we'll be trying to fill the enormous gap left when existing plants are forced offline by misguided regulatory pressure. Pragmatism is the path forward, and it's what U.S. consumers deserve.

Author

- Terry M. Jarrett

Terry was appointed to the Missouri Public Service Commission in 2007. During his six years as a State utilities regulator, Terry became a nationally-recognized leader in energy, utility and regulatory issues. He served as Chairman of the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners' (NARUC) Committee on Critical Infrastructure. During his tenure, he focused on cybersecurity issues and led NARUC to be one of the major organizations influencing national cybersecurity policy for critical infrastructure.