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- [Editorials](#)
- [Commentary](#)
- [Letters](#)
- [Water Cooler](#)
- [Decker](#)
- [Kuhner](#)
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- [Mastio](#)
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EDITORIAL: Chu'd out

Americans can't afford a wasteful energy secretary

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If only the administration's Solyndra scandal were a garden-variety case of crony-capitalist payback to political supporters. It's much worse, as President [Obama\(/topics/barack-obama/\)](#)'s energy policy is fixated on solving the supposed global-warming crisis, regardless of the economic cost.

Energy Secretary [Steven Chu\(/topics/steven-chu/\)](#) traveled to Capitol Hill on Nov. 17 to defend his decision to pour \$535 million into the ill-fated Solyndra, which filed for bankruptcy in August. He denied that his order was "based on political considerations" and told lawmakers the United States must compete for business in an \$80 billion clean-energy market that is expected to grow by hundreds of billions in coming decades. "We are in a fierce global race to capture this market," he argued.

Then [Mr. Chu\(/topics/steven-chu/\)](#) pointed an envious finger at Beijing. [The China Development Bank\(/topics/china-development-bank/\)](#) has extended credit lines of more than \$34 billion to Chinese solar companies, he lamented, but [Congress\(/topics/congress/\)](#) has appropriated only \$10 billion to backstop the [Energy Department\(/topics/united-states-department-of-energy/\)](#)'s loan program. The energy secretary concluded his testimony, saying, "When it comes to the clean-energy race, America faces a simple choice: Compete or accept defeat. I believe we can and must compete."

What [Mr. Chu\(/topics/steven-chu/\)](#) didn't mention is the "clean" energy market is an artificial one built upon an unsound theory. It posits that combustion of the carbon-based fuels that power modern civilization is elevating levels of atmospheric carbon dioxide, trapping heat and cooking the planet's biosphere. What's missing in this scary tale is the link between cause and effect. If an increase in carbon dioxide from human activity causes rising temperatures, then the warming trend should have accelerated as industrialization has spread. It hasn't.

Global warming, renamed "climate change" to downplay the embarrassing absence of actual warming, is an article of faith, not a product of science. It appeals to utopians who believe human beings are defiling an otherwise pure planet. The idea is to impose restrictions on conventional power sources and to favor antiquated

sources of energy like windmills - as if reversing the effects of civilization will somehow restore Earth's equilibrium. For those who buy into this, Solyndra was just a temporary setback.

[Mr. Obama\(/topics/barack-obama/\)](#) used his Australian visit last week to reaffirm his adherence to the global warming credo: "I share the view of ... most scientists in the world that climate change is a real problem and that human activity is contributing to it, and that we all have a responsibility to find ways to reduce our carbon emissions." As he did so, China was wooing TransCanada with an offer to buy the oil that [Mr. Obama\(/topics/barack-obama/\)](#) refused when he blocked construction of the Keystone XL pipeline the week before. While [Mr. Chu\(/topics/steven-chu/\)](#) covets China's trendy energy subsidies, Beijing has the good sense to pursue real fuel sources.

An artificial solar and wind energy market propped up by ideology rather economics is destined to collapse, taking taxpayer funds with it. It doesn't have to be that way. Americans stand upon the world's most expansive reservoirs of affordable, conventional energy resources. The nation can no longer afford the policies of [Steven Chu\(/topics/steven-chu/\)](#) and [Barack Obama\(/topics/barack-obama/\)](#) that keep domestic energy sources off-limits.

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