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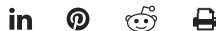
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VIEWPOINTS

If Newsom wants climate action, why dismiss a California clean energy plan as ‘fairy dust’?

BY ALEX JACKSON AND V. JOHN WHITE *SPECIAL TO THE SACRAMENTO BEE*

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California Lt. Gov. Gavin Newsom, center, a member of the State Lands Commission, questions Erich Pica, president of Friends of the Earth, left, and Geisha Williams, president of electric for Pacific Gas & Electric, about the closure of the Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power, Tuesday, June 28, 2016, in Sacramento, Calif. RICH PEDRONCELLI AP



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With only a few weeks remaining in the legislative session, Gov. Gavin Newsom [introduced a multi-billion dollar climate package](#) that could do a lot of good. But the proposals have a few glaring omissions.

On one hand, Newsom pushed the Legislature to significantly expand California's climate objectives, turning a statewide goal of carbon neutrality into law and increasing the state's greenhouse gas emissions reductions targets. On the other hand, he proposed something that would have been [unthinkable](#) even a few years ago: [delaying the planned retirement of the Diablo Canyon nuclear plant](#) for up to 10 years.

Newsom says it's a necessary step to "keep the lights on" as the state transitions to a 100% clean power system.

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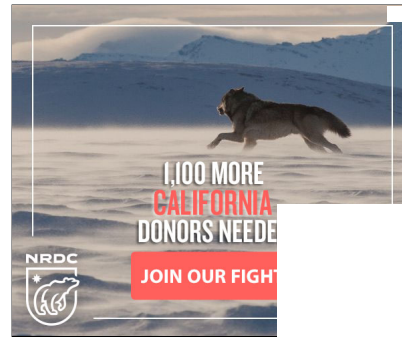
OPINION

But that’s not the only unsettling element of the governor’s climate package. It sets big targets but lacks a plan for actually accelerating the production of new clean power in California. While goal-setting could boost clean energy demand, the funding in the governor’s so-called budget trailer bill would be spent on legacy power resources, including \$1.4 billion for PG&E to begin the fraught process of extending the life of Diablo.

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The state Assembly [proposed an alternative last week](#) that would instead invest in expanding the state’s clean power supplies. The plan would help reduce permitting delays, accelerate power line development and hold utilities accountable for energy procurement.

Newsom’s office called the proposal [“fantasy and fairy dust.”](#)

If that’s where the administration stands on clean energy policies, California is in trouble.



For years, clean energy providers and climate activists have urged the state to plan for exactly this moment in our transition to clean power — when aging fossil fuel facilities would be ready for retirement and nuclear power would be phasing out.

The state’s energy agencies have done study after study on how much new clean energy California needs to meet even our existing climate targets. It’s a big number: [roughly 6 gigawatts of renewable and storage resources every year for the next 25 years](#), according to a [2021 report](#) by California’s utility, energy and air quality regulators. But over the last decade, the state’s planning, procurement and permitting systems have only allowed wind, solar and other clean energy producers to build an average of 1.3 gigawatts per year.

California has access to huge amounts of affordable, reliable and renewable energy, but to get to 100% clean power, we need to be producing at least three times more clean energy every year than we are today.

Without a plan to achieve that level of deployment, it's our climate goals that look like fantasy.

The Assembly package offers many pragmatic steps to expand solar, onshore and offshore wind, energy storage technologies and other clean power resources Californians will rely on for the remainder of the 21st century — regardless of whether Diablo keeps running. While Diablo can produce roughly 2.2 gigawatts of energy, the state has as much as 5 gigawatts of renewable energy and storage capacity awaiting delayed approvals. Meanwhile, another 15 gigawatts of potential wind power is available in states across the West, ready to be brought online quickly to support California's energy needs.

The only way California can promote a truly comprehensive climate strategy while maintaining the reliability of the electric grid is to prioritize an expanded portfolio of clean power resources and bring them online as quickly as possible. The Newsom administration needs to stop talking about clean energy and start doing the work required to make it a reality.

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