

AGAINST THE WIND

Maryland faces the same energy choices as the nation overall.

Shortly before Congress left for its long summer vacation, Senator Barbara Mikulski [tried to block](#) a 150-megawatt wind farm.

The Maryland Democrat's move would delay Pioneer Green Energy's construction of the project in her own state until an independent study from MIT concerning the effects of wind turbines on naval radar testing at the Patuxent River Naval Base is completed.



Leo Reynolds/Flickr

While it's understandable that Mikulski wouldn't want anything to interfere with a major military installation, what makes her move inexplicable is that Pioneer Green Energy is

already working with the base to ensure that its wind farm won't disrupt the base's radar, as required by law.

Technically, she's seeking a delay via language inserted in a Department of Defense appropriations bill. But the postponement would potentially push the project's timeline out past the qualifying deadline for tax credits. That could effectively end the project, no matter what the MIT study finds.

This is just one of many attempts to kill wind farms. Opponents have lodged about 50 lawsuits in this country and around the world against wind projects because they allegedly cause "wind turbine syndrome," a discredited condition first described by a pediatrician in 2009. The alleged symptoms of the syndrome range from headaches to sleeplessness to forgetfulness. These symptoms haven't held up in court: 48 of the 49 suits have been [dismissed](#).

Wind power foes also object to clusters of turbines for aesthetic reasons and their potential to reduce property values. This concern doesn't pass the sniff test either. An extensive Energy Department study found no "consistent, measurable, and significant effect on the selling prices of nearby [homes](#)."

Other opponents fear that turbines will kill tons of birds. In reality, wind farms aren't nearly as deadly to our feathered friends as office buildings and cats, just to name two major avian killers. And when was the last time you heard about someone trying to ban buildings and cats to save birds?

Even when the opposition to wind power fails — which it often does — the resistance hurts wind farm developers. It also sends a chilling message to an industry that lacks the deep pockets of fossil-fuel companies and lobbyists. And those oil, gas, and coal special interests are funding many of the attacks on wind and renewable energy in the [firstplace](#).

What makes these assaults on wind particularly troubling is that the United States is rapidly moving forward with several projects that will ramp up domestic oil and gas production.

In fact, the United States is now on track to be the world's top oil and gas producer, and is a net oil exporter for the first time since [1995](#).

Much of this increased oil and gas output is being extracted through hydraulic fracturing, or "fracking." And the toll of this method is becoming increasingly clear. From contaminated

drinking water, to polluted air, to ruined infrastructure from endless trucks carting water, fracking is leaving its devastating mark on towns across the country.

Fracking, and fossil-fuel extraction in general, also contributes to boom-and-bust economies that siphon most economic benefits out of local communities, which are then left to deal with the resulting devastation on their own.

Maryland faces the same energy choices as the nation overall. While Mikulski's legislative maneuvers may kill a major wind farm, Dominion Energy is working to build a \$3.8 billion liquefied natural gas export terminal on Maryland's Eastern Shore called Cove Point. That facility would endanger local communities, increase pollution, and ramp up fracking in nearby states — potentially leading to [fracking in Maryland itself](#) — while boosting natural gas prices [in the U.S.](#) market.

A Maryland judge recently ruled that zoning laws and the Maryland Constitution were violated in permitting Cove Point, which will [slow the project](#). That gives the state and Cove Point's Wall Street backers time to heed the concerns expressed by opponents of this dangerous facility.

Ideally, investors could shift the \$3.8 billion going to Cove Point to wind power. That move would increase East Coast wind production by 50 percent, and create over [7,500 jobs](#). It would also serve as a model for the country in how to invest in a clean energy future.

Source : <http://otherwords.org/maryland-wind-power-challenge/>