

HEAT OR EAT?

While gas prices are expected to cool in the short term, energy prices march relentlessly upward as some state and federal policymakers double down on misguided energy policies. The critical issue is the enactment of limits on energy choice, restrictions on delivery and attempts to force Americans to electrify everything, regardless of the costs, both financially and in terms of quality of life.

The financial cost, however, is truly staggering. If such policies were fully enacted, it would have forced consumers to spend at least **\$137.4 billion** more on electricity and home heating this winter than a year ago, according to Consumer Energy Alliance’s winter fuels analysis, using the latest federal government data.

As interest rates climb, economists warn of a recession, and inflation keeps raising the price of all goods and services, American families are feeling the constant drain on their bank accounts. Adding to this pain, Americans are being forced to set aside even more money as elected leaders in Washington and some states seek to eliminate consumer choice when it comes to heating their homes and fueling their lives.

What consumers need now, more than ever, are commonsense, inclusive energy policies which provide relief from high gasoline prices and elevated utility bills.

Recently, the Energy Information Administration (EIA) [released](#) its Winter Fuels Outlook, with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration [forecasting](#) the U.S. will experience a mild winter due to El Nino. Despite this potential weather reprieve, EIA base case estimates show that families will keep paying historically high prices for energy this winter heating season.

One bright spot: Families who use natural gas for heat will see home energy cost savings of 21% versus last winter. Although prices vary widely by region, families living in areas with natural gas restrictions will pay much more for their electricity, with some areas being hit harder based on their location, weather and policy environment.

However, there is trouble on the horizon that can now be quantified. In August, the Department of Energy (DOE) quietly [announced](#) the average cost for residential energy resources because it didn’t fit the approved narrative. If the rush to electrify everything is successful, based on DOE cost projections, American families that currently have the choice to rely on affordable, abundant natural gas would go from saving almost \$13.1 billion on energy bills this winter to spending **\$129 billion more**.

FUEL SOURCE	COST	ELECTRIFY EVERYTHING COST	ADDITIONAL COST TO CONSUMERS
NATURAL GAS	\$45,270,620,732	\$174,298,419,868	\$129,027,799,136
HEATING OIL	\$12,226,502,401	\$14,704,903,784	\$2,478,401,383
PROPANE	\$9,844,952,096	\$15,703,655,869	\$5,858,703,773
TOTAL	\$67,342,075,229	\$204,706,979,522	\$137,364,904,293

For the past three years, policy decisions in Washington D.C. and states like California and New York have discouraged investment in American energy development and infrastructure construction, increasing the cost to produce and deliver the energy we need, in the name of electrification. This can be seen in the enacting of oil and gas development moratoriums, cancelling or limiting future federal lease sales, blocking pipelines, and restricting energy transmission infrastructure development.

Our ability to develop and deliver affordable energy used to be a major strategic advantage the United States enjoyed, after it became the world's largest energy producer. But this advantage is fading.

After our ability to boost domestic energy production diminished because of regulatory or policy restrictions, OPEC+ nations resumed deploying energy as an economic [weapon](#) – as they have for decades – leaving American families and businesses again subject to the whims of foreign nations that do not require or care to use the same rigorous environmental standards we do.

Instead of encouraging American companies to develop the resources, innovative technology, and affordable supply of energy America and its allies need, current policies in Washington seek to:

- Drain the Strategic Petroleum Reserve – [designed](#) for emergencies – to its lowest level in almost 40 years, eliminating a safeguard against OPEC+ and geopolitical shocks like the outbreak of war between Israel and Hamas. The SPR now [holds](#) roughly 17 days of coverage, based on the latest [EIA data](#).
- Embark on a crusade to electrify everything without regard to the known environmental and infrastructure concerns, and while eliminating [consumer choice](#) to purchase the appliances you want under the costly guise of efficiency standards.
- Slow-walk the ability of states to manage their own carbon capture and storage programs, [eliminating opportunities](#) to reach a lower carbon future at scale and speed.

The question of why federal and some state policymakers are purposefully endangering America's energy security, needlessly keeping energy costs high and risking more blackouts for negligible environmental benefits remains unanswered. Recent innovations and technology have proven without any doubt that it is possible to produce the energy we need every day in an affordable, reliable way while [lowering](#) our environmental impact.

Luckily, [most](#) state leaders have embraced consumer energy choice. And, energy producing states are answering the call – increasing energy production on state and private land while further diversifying our energy mix, while leading to positive environmental outcomes. Meanwhile, the federal government has leased the [fewest](#) acres of land since the end of World War II, limiting the ability of consumers to see real energy savings, while hampering the ability of states to responsibly manage carbon dioxide.

Regrettably, this rushed effort impacts more than just what consumers pay – it impacts lives. Researchers have determined that lower natural gas prices, driven by robust American energy development prior to 2021, cut heating costs and helped reduce winter mortality, averting [12,500](#) deaths a year in the U.S., largely in communities with high poverty rates.

The most vulnerable communities, such as seniors, will continue to be disproportionately burdened by policies that cause energy costs to rise. An unconscionably high [14.1%](#) of our seniors, over 8 million older Americans, fell in to poverty last year.

Unsustainable energy costs hit all of us. Americans' savings keep dwindling, with [52%](#) saying they do not have enough emergency savings, if any. Those who are saving are saving [less](#) amid "economic uncertainty."

Sadly, these historically high energy costs have been driven by bad energy policies that ultimately burden families and harm our environment. It is time for policymakers to acknowledge their mistakes, and embrace commonsense policies that ensure we have an affordable, reliable, and environmentally sustainable energy supply.