

Opinion

Tim Echols column: Why Georgia doesn't need the Green New Deal

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Much has been made about the Green New Deal and hope for a national energy plan. I have pushed back against this proposal much the same way I resisted the "Clean Power Plan" from several years ago. Here's why I am concerned.

First, our overall electricity prices are currently sitting at 15 percent below the national average, according to power company comparisons using Energy Information Administration data. Our competitive electricity prices have been good for both consumers and businesses.

Under our leadership, we are just less than three years away from starting up advanced technology nuclear units that together will reduce CO₂ by about 10 million metric tons per year! And when combined with the existing two units — the total will be 20 million tons per year. In fact, Vogtle is slated to become the largest nuclear station in the U.S.

The Green New Deal leaves nuclear out of the mix. In fact, it calls for a complete phase-out of nuclear energy in 10 years. That is a mistake because nuclear plants allow for carbon-free uninterrupted baseload generation of electricity for possibly 80 years. This is especially important since we in Georgia have closed or fuel-switched over 4800 megawatts of coal-fired generation — plants that could run 24/7. In 2018, nuclear energy provided for over 56 percent of our nation's emissions-free zero carbon electricity, according to Nuclear Energy Institute.

These actions coupled with significant environmental investments have yielded results. SO₂, NO_x, and mercury emissions are down over 90 percent and CO₂ emissions are down over 50 percent. Georgia's Integrated Resource Planning, mandated by the 1991 Legislature, has helped us chart an orderly transition from