

Biden's Plan To 'Transition Away' From The Oil Industry Would Hurt New Mexico, Texas The Most

Both Republicans and Democrats are pushing back on comments Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden made about “transitioning away” from the oil industry.

At the presidential debate Thursday night, Biden said, “I would transition away from the oil industry, yes. The oil industry pollutes, significantly. It has to be replaced by renewable energy over time.” Texas Gov. Greg Abbott, a Republican, replied, tweeting, “Biden wants to 'transition' away from the oil industry. He just killed paycheck[s] earned by hardworking families in Texas. Joe just wants to transition away from Texas. Remember that on election day.”

While Texas' governor pushed back against Biden's comments, New Mexico Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham seems to embrace them. New Mexico, the third largest oil-producing state in the U.S., accounts for more than 30 percent of onshore natural gas production in the U.S. and nearly 60 percent of all onshore oil production.

But Lujan Grisham, for at least the second time during the campaign, plans to join an event Thursday being held by “Clean Energy for Biden.”

“Joe Biden told the world he wants to get rid of the oil industry and it’s abhorrent that our own Governor agrees,” Larry Behrens, Western States Director for Power The Future, said in a Wednesday statement. “Governor Lujan Grisham has delivered massively high unemployment along with the fewest energy jobs in a decade, so it’s clear why she is working so hard to get a new job. She simply doesn’t want to have to look New Mexico’s energy workers in the eye and be accountable.”

Oil and natural gas contribute \$3.1 billion to New Mexico's state budget, or 39 percent of the total. Oil and natural gas revenue increased by \$910 million from fiscal year 2018 to fiscal year 2019, the New Mexico Oil and Gas Association says.

Transitioning away from oil and gas "would absolutely destroy New Mexico’s economy and kill thousands of middle-class jobs in our state,” Behrens told The Center Square.

New Mexico Democrat Congresswoman Xochitl Torres Small, whose district is heavily dependent on the oil and gas industry for jobs, said she disagreed with Biden’s plan. She tweeted, “Energy is part of the backbone of New Mexico’s economy. We need to work together to promote responsible energy production and stop climate change, not demonize a single industry.”

The U.S. leads the world in crude export, with Texas, New Mexico and Louisiana leading the way. Texas is the largest producer of crude oil and natural gas in the U.S. According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA), Texas produced 41 percent of U.S. crude oil alone last year.