

## NEWS BREAK

Sunday's News Break selects an article from **Sunday, June 4, 2017** of The Seattle Times print replica for an in-depth reading of the news. Read the selected article and answer the attached study questions.

**\*Please remember to always preview the content of the article before sharing with your students.**

**Article: WINDS of CHANGE?**

**Section: BUSINESS, D1**

**Pre-Reading Discussion:**



- What do you think these pictures are of?
- Have you seen these before?
- Where are they generally located? Why?
- What are they called?
- What do they produce?
- What do you think the article will be about?
- What other renewable sources of energy are happening now?
- Why is it important for the world to find new sources of energy?

## Comprehension Questions:

1. \_\_\_\_\_, with their rapid geographic spread and technological advances, are reshaping the electric system, defying skepticism that they are steady or reliable enough to displace conventional power plants.
2. Now politics, not skepticism, may be wind power's biggest barrier. Under new leadership with ties to conventional energy interests, the Energy Department is scrambling to complete an internal study in the next month that could lead to what?
3. In ordering the study, Energy Secretary Rick Perry directed his department to determine whether federal subsidies that encourage wind and solar energy — and the way wholesale markets value different energy sources — are doing what?
4. The study has been praised by what groups?
5. But it is being conducted without including many of those potentially affected. And clean-energy executives and advocates, as well as some lawmakers, have expressed concern over what?
6. Energy experts say that without the credit and other favorable subsidies, mandates and market policies in place, wind development and production will be what?

## Discussion Questions, Extension Essay Questions or Journal Prompts:

- Why is harnessing the wind for energy such a good idea?
- Why should the U.S. move away from coal and nuclear plants?

***Rep. Paul D. Tonko, D-N.Y., who serves on the House Energy and Commerce Committee, raised concerns at a recent meeting of utility-industry executives that the new study would not be objective. "It appears to me to be a bottom line that's written and now looking for a study to substantiate it," he said in an interview. "I think it's an attempt to hold on to the past."***

- Do you agree or disagree with Tonko's statement? Why or why not?

***Among the subsidies the department is examining is a production tax credit (PTC) that allows most wind farms to shave pennies off the price of each kilowatt-hour they send to the grid. Though flattening demand for electricity and cheap natural gas are the main forces depressing wholesale energy prices, the credit means that wind producers can often offer their power to the market at the lowest price. Sometimes, when energy demand is low and wind is strong, the credit can drive the effective price below zero.***

***Perry has raised the possibility of federal intervention in energy markets to protect coal and nuclear plants against lower-priced wind and natural-gas supplies. While he backed state control of market policies as Texas governor, he said at a conference in April that “the boot’s on the other foot now.”***

- What does “the boot’s on the other foot now” mean?

***Perry has relationships with executives in the oil, gas and nuclear-waste industries. But the Energy Department said its review was simply meant to ensure a balanced and secure energy supply, and noted the surge in wind development during his time as governor, making Texas the leading wind-energy producing state by far.***

- What do you think the review was meant to do? Why?
- What are some of the underlying connections to the study?
- Why is Perry doing this?

***“The PTC is one piece of the puzzle and allows us to offer wind at a price that is below virtually any other alternative,” he said, adding that as renewables continued to come down in price they would be able to expand even as the subsidies phase out. “It’s working for us — you can have a cleaner product and it can be affordable.”***

- Wouldn’t we all want a cleaner and more affordable product for electricity and energy sources? Why is there a problem with moving forward with these alternative energy sources?

News Break is posted to the Web on Monday and Wednesday. Please share this NIE News Break program with other teachers. To sign-up for the print replica for your class, please [register on-line](#) or call 206/652-6290 or toll-free 1-888/775-2655.

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## **Newsbreak Answer Key: June 4, 2017**

### **Comprehension Answers**

1. Wind farms
2. An upending of the policies that fostered the rapid spread of solar and wind.
3. Putting conventional power plants at a disadvantage and threatening the stability of the grid.
4. Trade groups representing the nuclear and coal industries.
5. That it will be grounded more in ideology than in evidence.
6. Threatened

### **Discussion Questions or Extension Essay Questions**

Answers will vary