

Title:

Is "Made In the USA" Destined To Be A Thing Of The Past?

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Summary:

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Keywords:

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Article Body:

There may come a time in the not-too-distant future when we don't make things in this country anymore. This isn't hype, this is basic economics. It is also two government policies at odds with each other. Policies that can and should change this year.

For decades our government has been pushing industries into using natural gas for their energy. Natural gas is a clean and efficient energy source, reducing greenhouse gas emissions by about 35 percent over other fossil fuels. Plenty of manufacturing industries switched over-the forest products industry relies on natural gas for nearly half of its purchased energy.

Additionally, millions of homes are now heated with natural gas; and thousands of fleet vehicles-buses and delivery trucks-run on natural gas. Demand for this clean energy source is way up.

There is, however, a problem.

All the while the government has been promoting the use of natural gas, driving up demand, they have been severely restricting the supply. Our government has put a ban on the exploration for natural gas-mostly in our coastal waters in the Southeast.

The area known as the Outer Continental Shelf, or OCS, off the Atlantic coast and in the Gulf of Mexico, has enough natural gas to heat 100 million homes for 60 years-or 20,000 factories for 30 years. But nobody is allowed to tap this resource. So practically every day the price of natural gas-with high demand and

limited supply-goes up. In the future we will be importing more and more natural gas, likely from countries with hostile policies towards the United States but plentiful natural gas reserves.

As prices for natural gas skyrocket-they are currently more than three times their historic average-manufacturing industries are suffering. Pushed into natural gas by the government, we are now suffocating on the lack of supply. Energy, once just a cost of doing business, is now the third highest expense for the forest products industry, and may soon rival the traditional top expenses: raw materials and employees and all their benefits.

The high price of natural gas, artificially created by poorly designed government policies, is wiping out our competitive advantage. In the end, it is going to cost American jobs and that "Made in the U.S.A" tag may, in fact, become something for the history books.