

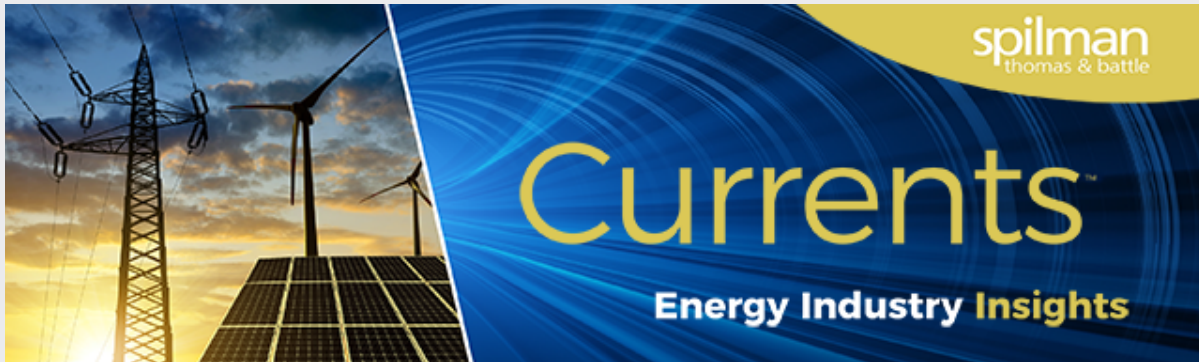
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Volume 6, Issue 2

● **Welcome**

Welcome to our second *Currents* issue of 2022.

Have you gotten a chance to fill out our survey? We would love your feedback on the issues we cover, the timing of these publications, and any other thoughts you may have. Click [here](#) to take the survey.

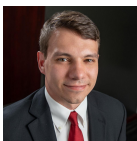
As always, thank you for reading.



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● **[Global Coal Prices Surge as Ukraine Tensions Worsen Supply Woes](#)**

"Europe relies on Russia for around 35% of its natural gas, and has been grappling with a gas shortage since last summer that sent local prices to record highs late last year."

Why this is important: World coal prices are rising after an end-of-year dip due to concerns over Ukraine/Russian tensions rising and coal supply woes causing countries like Indonesia to keep more coal for domestic consumption instead of exporting it. For Europe, 35 percent of its gas comes from Russian pipelines. Concerns over a Ukraine invasion by Russia and higher gas prices generally are leading to a resurgence of coal-fired electrical power generation in Europe. Also in reaction to rising prices, some countries like China and Philippines are focusing on increasing domestic production. All this turmoil likely will help U.S. coal and gas exports and create higher prices. --- [Mark E. Heath](#)

● [Biden Decarbonization Goals Could Triple Reliance on Electric Grid: EPRI](#)

"About 20% of end-use energy consumption in the United States today is electricity, but that could rise to 60% by 2050 as the country moves towards a carbon-neutral economy, according to EPRI's analysis."

Why this is important: Electrification of the economy, through adoption of electric vehicles and conversion of home heating and industrial heat sources to electricity, is often advocated as a way to reduce fossil fuels. Today, electricity powers only about 20 percent of the U.S. economy, and electricity is still predominantly generated from fossil fuels and nuclear. If significant increases in electrical demand are expected, big increases in generation will be needed and renewables may not be able to shoulder that entire load. --- [David L. Yaussy](#)

● [WV House Committee Focused on Coalfields Begins Efforts](#)

"The committee is considering establishing a program for municipal governments to secure money for projects."

Why this is important: A new West Virginia select committee is looking to help struggling coal communities. While coal has rebounded in the past year, it has not returned to earlier employment levels, leading to economic stress in many former booming areas. In the past year, the committee held six public hearings for input and was told the state should address infrastructure, diversify economies, expand recreation and tourism, support outside resource access, and expand educational opportunities. One particular issue to be addressed is how to come up with the 10 percent local match for federal funding. Many struggling communities cannot raise the match to get 90 percent of federal funds for approved projects. --- [Mark E. Heath](#)

● [WV Senate Passes Bill that Would Repeal Ban on Nuclear Energy Production](#)

"West Virginia instituted a ban on nuclear power production in 1996, with a law that addresses concern about waste disposal along with questions over economic feasibility."

Why this is important: The article describes some of the legislative reasoning behind a bill that has passed the Senate that would repeal a ban on the construction of nuclear power plants in West Virginia that has been in place since 1996. Those in favor of the repeal note the potential for the state to bring in new energy-related production opportunities as part of an "all-of-the-above" energy strategy for the economy. While some legislators are cautious given historic concerns about nuclear power and nuclear waste, those who voted in favor of the repeal note that ample regulations are already in place at the state and federal level, and that West Virginia should be open to the idea of considering new nuclear technologies if they develop as a result of free market forces. --- [Derrick Price Williamson](#)

● [Hydrogen Power is Gaining Momentum, but Critics Say It's Neither Efficient Nor Green Enough](#)

"That process is also inefficient and expensive compared with other forms of energy, renewable or not."

Why this is important: Hydrogen is getting a ton of press these days as a fuel of the future, storable and flexible, capable of providing heat by combustion and electricity through fuel cells. However, the cheapest way to produce it is by stripping the hydrogen from natural gas molecules, which results in carbon dioxide as a waste product -- the same as burning the natural gas. Producing it in greener ways is inordinately expensive. Add to that the high cost of storing and transporting hydrogen, and it's easy to see why it is running into resistance from end users and environmentalists alike. --- [David L. Yaussy](#)

● [WV Senate Passes Bill to Set Up Mining Mutual Insurance Company with \\$50M Seed Money Source Still Undetermined](#)

Why this is important: The West Virginia Senate has passed a bill to create a mining mutual insurance company to help address reclamation obligations. The private non-stock company would be set up with \$50 million in seed funds from the DEP, but a source for the funds has not been addressed. Currently, one concern over reclamation bonding is the fact that five companies provide 91 percent of the reclamation bonds in West Virginia and one company alone has 67 percent of the state's reclamation bonds. That one company has posted \$620 million in reclamation bonds. The \$50 million start-up funds would be returned to the state as sites are reclaimed. A similar method was used to address workers' compensation and medical insurance issues in the past. --- [Mark E. Heath](#)

● [WVU Engineers Seek to Reuse Waste Plastics to Make Valuable Petrochemicals](#)

Why this is important: West Virginia University is studying ways to recycle plastics by reducing them to their chemical components so they can be used to manufacture more plastics. HB 4084, being considered by the West Virginia Legislature this year, would clarify that this sort of recycling is not solid waste management -- it is manufacturing. The West Virginia Manufacturers Association is spearheading passage of the bill, which is receiving broad support. --- [David L. Yaussy](#)

● [Have You Filled Out Our Survey?](#)

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● [EIA Energy Statistics](#)

Here is a round-up of the latest statistics concerning the energy industry.

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Natural Gas Weekly Update

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