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SYMPOSIUM

GREENING THE GRID: BUILDING A LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CARBON NEUTRALITY

SYMPOSIUM ARTICLES

While the electricity industry is significantly challenged by climate change, climate change also presents a significant opportunity for the industry to restructure itself. Central to a successful restructuring is the construction of a smart grid, which promises greater energy and economic efficiency, increased use of renewable resources, and a reduction of carbon emissions. This Article argues that the technology exists for the construction of a successful smart grid, and now federal and state regulators must support those efforts through a renegotiated regulatory compact.

Traveling across the legal, regulatory, and physical frontiers of the new "smarter" grid, this Article fathoms the complexities of the new legal architecture of the American "smarter" grid. There is much more to the transmission grid than just poles and wires: Modern society depends on speed-of-light movement of electrons over thousands of miles in a system that is the last of the regulated industries in America. As we move toward using more wind and solar power, there are concerns that these technologies are intermittent resources, which on an hourly basis ebb and flow in only partly predictable manners. In this Article, the heretofore largely hidden issue of whether the grid has the backup, quick-start power resources to deal with this intermittency is examined—it doesn't. This has profound social and financial consequences on the power future. The author analyzes the move to renewable power, the implications for the "smarter" grid, and the resultant legal and regulatory issues confronting the system.

SYMPOSIUM ESSAY

Professor Kaswan argues that environmental and economic justice considerations are central to debates about whether, and how, to green the grid. She surveys the collateral environmental and economic benefits and risks presented by a transition to renewable energy, and argues that integrating such concerns into climate policy would further, rather than hinder, the political prospects for greening the grid.

COMMENTS

Global warming has impacts that will be, and are, catastrophic. Efforts to slow the effects of global warming are present at the state level. Global warming initiatives include a carbon sequestration component that is based on carbon cycling science. It is crucial to understand the adequacy of the science and the interplay between the science and the overall policies of the initiatives.

BOOK REVIEW