SALT LAKE CITY
The Trump administration is committed to making fossil fuels cleaner rather than imposing “draconian” regulations on oil, gas and coal, U.S. Energy Secretary Rick Perry said Thursday.

Perry made his remarks at an energy conference in Salt Lake City that was briefly interrupted when protesters took the stage to criticize the administration’s fixation on fossil fuels as a misguided approach that ignores climate change. The demonstrators were escorted out by police.

The former Texas governor said the government has proven it can make traditional energy sources cleaner.

“Instead of punishing fuels that produce emissions through regulation, we’re seeking to reduce those emissions by innovation,” Perry said. “We have proved that we can make our energy cleaner without surrendering one single fuel, one bit of growth, one iota of opportunity.” —Rick Perry
He also touted the importance of increasing geothermal and nuclear energy.

Perry didn’t elaborate on how that would be done.

Perry previously had said the Trump administration wants to spend a half-billion dollars next year on fossil fuel research and development as demand plummets for coal and surges for natural gas.

The protesters interrupted a panel discussion and stood on stage in front of the seated Perry, Utah Gov. Gary Herbert and Wyoming Gov. Mark Gordon as they talked about energy policy.

The group of about 15 people sang and held signs that read “Invest in our future, not climate chaos” and “Your time is up. Climate Action Now.”

The group later said the protesters were students who wanted to make the point that society must transition to renewable energy to “prevent climate catastrophe.”

After several minutes, conference organizers put on loud music as they waited for police to escort the protesters out.

After they left, Herbert, who sponsored the event, said he and other leaders appreciate the “youthful enthusiasm” of the protesters and their voices should be heard and respected. But he said the call to immediately discard fossil fuels and shift entirely to renewable energy isn’t realistic.

“They would like us to quit by Friday and not take anything out of the ground,” Herbert said. “That obviously doesn’t work from a practical standpoint.”

Perry argued that people who say fossil fuels should be kept in the ground aren’t thinking through the global impact of that suggestion.

“What does that mean to a young woman in a village in Africa that doesn’t have so much as a light bulb on which to read?” Perry said.

He said the U.S. has responsibility to help deliver energy to those parts of the world.

Gordon said Americans need to better appreciate the value of fossil fuels and understand they need to be part of the energy mix.

“Fossil fuels have generated more wealth than anything else for our country, for our people,” Gordon said. “Moving our energy postures forward doesn’t mean we have to crush somebody else.”
CaliforniaGeo Responds—
When jockeying for his party’s ticket in the 2012 presidential election, Rick Perry showed his stuff in a 1-9-12 debate hosted by CNBC. As President, he wanted to eliminate three federal agencies. Commerce and Education were two he could recite but the third slipped his mind for a difficult long moment ending with his utterance of “Oops.”

Fifteen minutes later in the debate, he replaced his blank with the Department of Energy which he now leads. But it seems that DOE has gained importance in his eyes because he is using it as a sledgehammer to pulverize long-standing regulatory policy, including the Obama rules on coal.

So, now, without any scientific proof, he sits in a PR gig with two other coal state governors to say that “innovation” will save the day. Maybe he forgot to bring the evidence of that. No one has yet devised a cost or technologically effective way to sequester carbon dioxide emissions from combusted fossil fuels.

In addition, coal plants that generate base load electricity are economically dying in multiple states. Some of those states are attempting to subsidize those plants for the remainder of their planned life. Meanwhile, methane is replacing coal in this role. Coal’s 20-year LCOE (levelized cost of energy) is more expensive than gas or solar PV. There’s no need to build or subsidize any coal plant. And nuclear energy is economically impossible.

Solar PV can be sited, permitted, and constructed in 15 months, tops. Fossil plants take much longer, and nuclear (even if it was remotely affordable) would take decades to complete and costs would be exponentially higher than original proposals.

Renewables (that are always no cost) are the only permanent solution that can halt global warming, provide safe jobs, and be installed quickly. Solar and wind in a grid scale battery world will expand beneficial electrification. Geo heat pumps can perform all necessary thermal tasks for buildings using a permanent underground resource while doing it with increasingly green electricity.