



Drumbeat: March 1, 2013

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[Energy policy shifting as abundance replaces scarcity: Obama adviser](#)

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - As U.S. oil and natural gas production booms, the Obama administration's energy policy has been "fluid" by necessity to adapt to the huge economic opportunities and climate challenges posed by growth, the top White House energy and climate adviser said on Wednesday.

In a speech to a room packed with energy analysts and lobbyists, Obama adviser Heather Zichal acknowledged that U.S. energy policy "might not look perfectly pretty from the outside" as it evolves to shifting supply-and-demand scenarios.

"It is a little bit fluid, but the landscape is changing," Zichal said at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington think-tank.

The White House wants to ensure oil and gas production is done as safely as possible, while investing in research and development of renewable forms of energy and addressing climate change, she said.

[America has an energy boom. Now what?](#)

NEW YORK (CNNA Money) - America's energy production is booming. What we should do about it is one of Washington's most divisive issues.

Since 2006, the country's natural gas production has surged 30%. Oil production is up 33%. The country is on track to surpass Saudi Arabia as the world's leading oil producer by 2020.

Champions of this boom point to the hundreds of thousands of jobs it has created and its significant contribution to reducing the country's reliance on foreign oil.

Critics counter that with those gains come real threats to the nation's environment, particularly its water supply. They also worry that this new-found abundance will foster a greater reliance on fossil fuels and a dangerous inattention to global warming.

On Wednesday, a group from the Bipartisan Policy Center -- including former senators, oil company executives, environmentalists and others with a stake in the game -- released a set of recommendations on how the country can best balance these competing interests. Here's a rundown on their suggestions.

[WTI Falls to 2013 Low as China Slows, OPEC Output Rises](#)

West Texas Intermediate dropped to the lowest price this year and headed for a second weekly decline as Chinese manufacturing expanded less than forecast and OPEC crude production rose for the first time in six months.

WTI fell below \$91 a barrel in New York for the first time since Dec. 31. The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries raised output by 97,000 barrels to 30.7 million a day in February, a Bloomberg survey showed. China's manufacturing purchasing managers index fell to 50.1 last month, compared with a median forecast of 50.5. Oil also fell as \$85 billion of spending cuts were about to be triggered in the U.S.

[Expect relief from record February gas prices](#)

Major maintenance work at many of the nation's refineries limited capacity and was responsible for much of February's increase, according to Tom Kloza, chief oil analyst at the Oil Price Information Service, which compiles price information for AAA.

Kloza said the maintenance was necessary in order for the refineries to handle different grades of shale oil now being produced in North America. February's demand for gasoline is typically lighter than later in the year, which made the timing ideal for the upgrades. But it meant that the pain of higher prices came earlier than normal.

[The states with the most expensive gas](#)

Gasoline prices rose more than 13% last month, and the chance that the average price per gallon nationwide could reach \$4 has become a real threat again. AAA's Fuel Gauge statistics show that the average reached \$3.73 over the Presidents Day weekend. In some states, the average price per gallon has moved above \$4, and several others are very close to that benchmark. Gas prices tend to be driven by oil prices, the distance that a state is from refineries, refinery activity, and, as much as anything else, state gas taxes. To review the states with sky-high gas prices, 24/7 Wall St. looked at current prices based on AAA data, 2011 census data by state, the U.S. Energy Information Administration's 2012 Refinery Capacity Report, which breaks out production by state based on barrels produced per calendar day and gas tax per state figures from the U.S. Tax Foundation. These are the seven states with sky-high gas prices.

[Saudi Arabia to lower crude prices](#)

Singapore: Top oil exporter Saudi Arabia may lower official selling prices in April for all crude grades for its Asian buyers after the Dubai crude and DME Oman prices weakened.

[Threat of Oil Price Spike Has Passed, According to The Boston Company Asset Management](#)

NEW YORK and LONDON /PRNewswire/ -- The days of worrying about the threat of a devastating oil price hike are over, according to a white paper from The Boston Company Asset Management, LLC, the Boston-based equity specialist for BNY Mellon.

For decades, pundits have been trying to predict the point at which a sustained climb in oil prices would spark a near-collapse of the global economy. However, TBC's February 2013 paper, End of an Era: The Death of Peak Oil, contends structural shifts in the energy industry have insulated the global economy from dramatic spikes in oil prices, while simultaneously creating an array of investment opportunities.

[What Happened to Peak Oil?](#)

Which leads one to wonder, first, weren't we supposed to be running out of oil. And, then, why does it cost so much more, every day, to fill up your tank?

[Petrol price to go up by Rs.1.40 per litre](#)

New Delhi (IANS) Petrol prices will go up by Rs.1.40 per litre, excluding taxes, from midnight Friday due to the depreciating rupee and a sharp increase in crude oil prices in global markets, the government-run oil marketing firms said Friday.

This is the second increase in petrol price in the past two weeks. It was hiked by Rs.1.50 per litre Feb 16.

[Norway boosts recoverable oil, gas resources estimate to 85.4 billion boe](#)

Norway's estimated recoverable oil and gas resources rose to 85.4 billion barrels of oil equivalent at the end of 2012, up 2.8 billion boe from the end of 2011, the Norwegian Petroleum Directorate said Friday.

The increase in total resources, which includes oil and gas already produced, stemmed from an increase in reserves estimates at some existing fields and undeveloped discoveries as well as higher estimates of undiscovered resources, the NPD said in a statement.

[BP says its Azeri oil output down 7 pct in 2012](#)

BAKU (Reuters) - BP's output at Azerbaijan's Azeri-Chirag-Guneshli (ACG) fields was down 7 percent in 2012, it said, showing a faster fall than that of total Azeri production in a trend that has drawn criticism from the country's president.

But the British oil major's output rose from the Shah Deniz gas field, the country's biggest.

[German 2014 Power Declines as European Coal, Carbon Prices Fall](#)

Power for 2014 in Germany, Europe's biggest economy, fell as coal dropped to a record and emissions allowances declined.

Baseload German 2014 electricity, for supplies delivered around the clock, slipped 0.6 percent, while coal lost 0.5 percent and carbon permits for December slid 2.4 percent. Power can track emissions and coal, which affect production costs.

[Consumer Spending in U.S. Climbs Even as Taxes Hurt Incomes](#)

Employment gains, the rebound in housing and growing demand for autos will probably keep supporting consumer spending in the first quarter as the world's largest economy picks up from an end-of-year slowdown. Even so, rising gasoline prices and the need to rebuild nest eggs may make it difficult for households to match last quarter's performance.

[The Gas Gougers](#)

Here we go again. A sudden surge in the price of gasoline and heating oil is followed by reported expressions of frustrated despair by hard-pressed consumers in the midst of silence from the oil companies and abdication of responsibility by the elected and appointed officials of federal and state governments.

[Sempra Said to Seek at Least \\$500 Million in Mexico Offering](#)

Sempra Energy, a U.S. gas distributor, plans to raise at least \$500 million in an initial public offering of its Mexico business, two people with direct knowledge of the sale said.

[Sunshine Oilsands Taps China for Output Boost](#)

Sunshine Oilsands Ltd., the first Canadian oil-sands operator to list shares on the Hong Kong exchange, is in "advanced" talks with joint-venture partners to boost production to a potential 1 million barrels a day.

Sunshine, whose shares slumped 47 percent to the lowest close yesterday since its Hong Kong trading debut last February, is in conversations with "more than two and less than 10" investors, Chief Executive Officer John Zahary said in an interview.

[Petrobras in Talks With Sinopec to Develop Brazil Refineries](#)

Petroleo Brasileiro SA , the world's most indebted publicly traded oil company, is in talks with China Petroleum & Chemical Corp. (600028) to build a refinery in Brazil to meet growing domestic demand, Brazil's energy minister said.

The state-controlled crude producers are also discussing partnerships for oil block auctions this year in Brazil, Edison Lobao told reporters in Brasilia today. Brazil's government advised Petrobras Chief Executive Officer Maria das Gracas Foster to seek partnerships in China, where she is now, he said.

[Norway does not control oil companies' past](#)

Norwegian authorities require a number of things from foreign oil and gas companies regarding the Norwegian Continental Shelf, but do not ask if they violate human rights in other countries.

[Ukraine hints at compromise in gas talks with Russia](#)

KIEV (Reuters) - Ukraine's president, set for tough talks with Russia's Vladimir Putin on the price of gas imports, hinted on Friday that Kiev was ready to offer some compromise over its gas pipeline network in a bid to secure lower energy prices from its giant neighbour.

Ukraine, a transit route for more than a half of Russian gas shipped to the European Union, and itself heavily reliant on Russian supplies, has repeatedly clashed with Moscow over the price of its imports.

[Cash and Kerry Not Enough for Syrian Fighters](#)

Secretary of State John Kerry's announcement that the U.S. will send nonlethal aid directly to Syrian rebels is a welcome expansion of U.S. involvement to end the conflict in Syria.

It doesn't go far enough, however, either in changing the facts on the ground in a vicious war that pits President Bashar al-Assad's Scud missiles against the rebels' small arms, or in winning over and empowering the more moderate elements within a coalition that risks being overshadowed by sectarian extremists.

[A.F.L.-C.I.O. Backs Keystone Oil Pipeline, if Indirectly](#)

ORLANDO — The A.F.L.-C.I.O., the nation's largest federation of unions, has issued an apparent endorsement of the Keystone XL oil pipeline — apparent because it enthusiastically called for expanding the nation's pipeline system, without specifically mentioning Keystone.

[Keystone XL focus shifts to climate change, oil lobby says](#)

CALGARY — A delegation of oil sands CEOs “couldn’t get a clear reading” in Washington this week over whether Barack Obama’s renewed focus on climate change means more uncertainty for the proposed Keystone XL pipeline, an executive with the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers said Thursday.

[Faulty Bolts Create Headaches for Offshore Industry](#)

The BSEE noted that the bolt failure has occurred on three rigs in the Gulf of Mexico, and it has ordered all operators in the Gulf to inspect their BOPs. The operators must direct the drilling contractors to pull the BOP to the surface and then suspend operations until an independent third party can certify that the existing bolts are sound, or if replacement bolts need to be installed and certified. GE said 24 of the 83 rigs drilling in the Gulf of Mexico are immediately affected, and several have already been cleared to return to drilling operations. In an environment of zero tolerance for issues around well control, we expect operators worldwide will be ordering drilling contractors to pull their BOPs as well. Shell and Statoil are already assessing their operations in the Gulf as well as worldwide.

[Lobbying Flurry Precedes U.S. Vote on Fukushima Rules](#)

A proposed requirement that U.S. nuclear-power plants add \$20 million devices to prevent radiation leaks, one of the costliest recommendations stemming from meltdowns in Japan two years ago, has attracted a flurry of last-minute lobbying.

[Taking a Fresh Look at Nuclear Waste](#)

The American program to dispose of spent nuclear fuel and other highly radioactive wastes is at a standstill for a variety of reasons. First-of-a-kind efforts tend to be technologically difficult, but the real problems are not hardware issues, according to a new book, “Too Hot to Touch: The Problem of High-Level Nuclear Waste.”

[High radiation in fish caught off No. 1 plant](#)

A greenling caught in the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant’s small harbor contained 510,000 becquerels of radioactive cesium per kilogram, 5,100 times above the state-set safety limit, Tokyo Electric Power Co. said.

[New cars increasingly out of reach for many Americans](#)

Looking to buy a new car, truck or crossover? You may find it more difficult to stretch the household budget than you expected, according to a new study that finds median-

income families in only one major U.S. city actually can afford the typical new vehicle.

[EPA evaluating how it rates gas mileage for hybrids](#)

The Environmental Protection Agency has launched an evaluation of whether the ways it tests gas mileage give realistic window-sticker ratings for advanced hybrid cars.

The probe centers on a generation of hybrids capable of highway speeds on electric power alone. Chris Grundler, EPA's director of the Office of Transportation and Air Quality, said he wants to be sure the EPA's testing procedures are keeping up with rapidly evolving auto technology.

"This is a different type of hybrid, and we need to understand it," he told USA TODAY in an interview.

[Peugeot Bets on a Different Kind of Hybrid](#)

Like a Toyota Prius, the Hybrid Air recovers energy each time the driver brakes or decelerates. But instead of using that braking energy to charge a battery, which then runs an electric motor — as in the Prius — the Hybrid Air has a reversible hydraulic pump that uses the braking energy to compress nitrogen gas in what looks like an oversized scuba tank. When the Hybrid Air driver next presses the accelerator, the compressed gas pushes hydraulic fluid, syringe fashion, through a gearbox to turn the wheels.

The energy stored in the nitrogen tank is small — equivalent to only about five teaspoons, or a couple dozen cubic centimeters, of gasoline — and enough to power the car only a few hundred meters before the standard gasoline motor takes over again. But repeated over the course of a day of city driving, Peugeot says, those extra teaspoons of energy add up to big improvement in gas mileage.

[A bigger tax break for those who take public transit](#)

As part of the American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2013, Congress decided that for 2013 people who take mass transit to work will get the same pretax benefits as those who drive and pay to park their car. Both can set aside up to \$245 a month to cover these expenses, if their employer offers such a plan.

That's a big change from last year, when employees could set aside up to \$240 a month to park, but only \$125 a month for transit expenses. In 2011, the tax savings had been the same for parking or public transportation.

[Green-Jobs Survey Dies as U.S. Readies Sequestration Cuts](#)

A program tracking U.S. green jobs, faulted by Republican lawmakers, will be scrapped by the Bureau of Labor Statistics as part of automatic budget cuts set to take effect today, according to a person familiar with the decision.

The move is a harbinger of program reductions that may occur across the government following the \$85 billion in across-the-board cuts, known as sequestration, for the current U.S. fiscal year.

[Are we near peak biofuels?](#)

(Reuters) - A stalled biofuel industry will need to produce far more efficient fuels to avoid setting off another bout of arguments over its contribution to boosting energy security and cutting carbon emissions.

[Biofuel Bust: Alleged cooking-oil thieves caught on camera stealing for alternative energy company](#)

"We lost about 10-20 thousand (dollars) a month from people stealing this oil from behind our restaurant," Lesperance said.

Lesperance said the women use a special apparatus to siphon the used oil from the top of a barrel.

"We call it an octopus, which has small tubes that go in between the grates to then extract the oil," he said.

[Shell Sees Solar as Biggest Energy Source After Exiting It](#)

Royal Dutch Shell Plc says solar power, a business it abandoned four years ago, may expand into the world's biggest source of energy in the next half century.

The proposition that photovoltaic panels will be the main power source by 2070 is one of the New Lens Scenarios Europe's largest oil company published today in a report on energy demand this century. A second has natural gas as the main fuel by 2030. Both come with risks to energy producers and the climate.

[Some Far Out \(at Least for Now\) Energy Ideas](#)

One of the problems with integrating renewable energy into the electric system is that wind and sun are intermittent, creating challenges for grid operators who need to provide a constant supply of electricity. Proton came up with a product that is the direct opposite of a fuel cell, which converts hydrogen to electric current and water. The oxygen and hydrogen atoms are instead split up in a chemical reaction, and the hydrogen can either be turned back into electricity in a fuel cell or used for industrial

purposes.

Proton is currently is working with the town of Hilo in Hawaii on an installation that would make hydrogen for a bus powered by a fuel cell. But the Proton equipment would also be connected to the local grid: upon receiving a signal, it would pull more current from the grid, or less, to keep supply and demand exactly balanced.

[A Little Guilt, a Lot of Energy Savings](#)

How can I convince you to conserve energy? I could remind you that using less power saves money and helps the environment, but you won't listen. Studies have proven that appeals to cost and conservation have no impact on people's energy consumption.

But what if I told you everyone in your neighborhood is reducing their energy consumption—except you? Would competition and a little fear of judgment convince you to switch off your air conditioner?

That's the theory driving Opower, a company that's helped millions of people lower their energy bills. Rather than sell or produce energy, it makes software—software that is changing the way Americans consume energy by setting them in a contest against their neighbors. In the process, Opower has discovered that when it comes to energy efficiency, conscientiousness doesn't inspire nearly as much change as competition (and a little judgment).

[From Energizer, Big Light in a Compact Package](#)

Hurricane season doesn't start until June 1, but after Hurricane Sandy caused so much destruction and left millions without power, it's never too early to start preparing for the next big storm.

To help, Energizer is introducing a new portfolio of innovative lighting products this spring that use "light fusion technology," which distributes light uniformly through laser-etched acrylic panels.

[Retirees turn to communal living in NY](#)

CHESTNUT RIDGE, N.Y. - At the Fellowship Community's adult home, workers are paid not according to what they do, but what they need; aging residents are encouraged to lend a hand at the farm, the candle shop or the pottery studio; and boisterous children are welcome around the old folks.

It's a home for the elderly in a commune-like setting — 30 miles from Manhattan — that takes an unusual approach, integrating seniors into the broader community and encouraging them to contribute to its welfare.

[Beijing Air Pollution Tops Hazardous Levels Days Before Congress](#)

Beijing's air pollution climbed to hazardous levels days before the national legislature opens its annual meeting, drawing new attention to environmental degradation that the government has promised to address.

[My Worms: Adventures in composting with 1,000 red wigglers](#)

So far, it's working. I may not be recycling all of our green waste, but I'm using enough of it to feel mildly virtuous, and the constant need for shredded paper makes a dent in our pile of junk mail. The worms seem to love the dead leaves from the tree in our yard and eagerly devour our weekend coffee grinds. They haven't tried to escape. And despite the fact that the composter—and the food scrap bucket—are still in the kitchen, neither smells. I've decided that a lack of foul odors will be my new general metric of success, both for worms and for life.

[Klamath County votes to withdraw from water deal](#)

KLAMATH FALLS, Ore. (AP) — The Klamath County Board of Commissioners voted Tuesday to withdraw from an agreement that lays out how to share scarce water between fish and farms, control power costs for irrigators, and restore broken down ecosystems.

[New Zealand: Big dry raises fears of dairy crash](#)

MetService says it will be weeks before any significant rain falls in key farming areas, putting the country's two leading exports, meat and dairy, under enormous pressure with production beginning to crash.

Farmers are rapidly getting rid of stock because of the big dry, putting important exports "under the gun", according to Federated Farmers.

[How the USDA plans to plant around climate change](#)

A few weeks ago, the Department of Agriculture released a pretty devastating report on just how bad climate change is going to suck for things we plant in the ground in America. Short version: T minus 25ish years until we hit Armageddon-like scenarios for agriculture and forests.

That might sound hopeless, but Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack is not discouraged. The Natural Resources Defense Council's Switchboard blog reports on a followup speech Vilsack gave this week, saying the USDA will help farmers adapt to climate change and become part of the climate solution.

[Army Signals Victory in Fight to Keep Mississippi Open to Barges](#)

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has declared victory, for now, in its battle to keep the drought- depleted Mississippi River open for barges moving commodities such as coal, grain and crude oil.

Contractors today completed emergency work that included excavating and blasting rock from the riverbed near the towns of Thebes and Grand Tower in southern Illinois, the Army and the U.S. Coast Guard said in a joint statement.

[NOAA's Coast Survey plans for new Arctic nautical charts](#)

“As multi-year sea ice continues to disappear, vessel traffic in the Arctic is on the rise,” said Rear Admiral Gerd Glang, NOAA Coast Survey director. “This is leading to new maritime concerns about adequate charts, especially in areas increasingly transited by the offshore oil and gas industry and cruise liners.”

[The Online Tool Destroying Climate Change Myths](#)

Get ready for a daily dose of climate reality. It's called the "Reality Drop" and is akin to an antidote given to patients bitten by a poisonous snake, only in this case it is intended to destroy the toxic global warming myths that seem to be poisoning the minds of people. As the slogan explains, "Spread Truth" and "Destroy Denial" about global warming, the Reality Drop campaign is specifically designed to debunk more than a hundred of the most deceptive myths about global warming with simple and succinct up-to-date science-based climate facts from credible sources.

[Climate sceptics 'capture' the Bloggies' science category](#)

Founder Nikolai Nolan admits that climate sceptic bloggers have pushed out 'legitimate' science blogs from his awards.

[New Ecology Paper Challenges “Tipping Point” Meme](#)

Even where tipping points have occurred on local and regional scales, there is empirical and experimental evidence to suggest that many ecosystems are able to recover even after heavy disturbance by humans.

[Public concern for environment lowest in 20 years](#)

Public concern in environmental issues including global warming, the loss of species and air pollution has dropped to its lowest level in two decades, according to an international

poll released this week.

The GlobeScan poll, undertaken last summer before superstorm Sandy hit the Caribbean and New York, showed levels of public concern in 12 countries over environmental problems – which also included fresh water shortages and depletion of natural resources – were even lower than 1992, when the first Earth summit was held in Rio.

[EU Carbon Surges the Most in 2 Weeks as Merkel Said to Back Fix](#)

European Union carbon permits surged the most in two weeks after a German lawmaker said Chancellor Angela Merkel shares her environment minister's stance on reducing a surplus of the allowances.

[South Africa delays carbon tax until 2015](#)

South Africa delayed introducing a carbon tax until 2015 after objections from metals companies such as ArcelorMittal South Africa and Gold Fields.

The tax of 120 rand (\$14) a metric ton of carbon on 40 per cent of a company's emissions will rise 10 per cent a year until 2020, the National Treasury said today in its Budget Review in Cape Town. The government is also considering scrapping an electricity levy over the same period, it said.

[Keystone halt would send strong signal-EU climate chief](#)

(Reuters) - The European Union's top climate change official said on Thursday that if the Obama administration rejects the proposed Keystone XL pipeline, it would send a strong message that the United States is serious about combating climate change.

"That would be an extremely strong signal for the Obama administration," Connie Hedegaard, the EU Commissioner for Climate Action, told reporters in a briefing in Washington.

[Arab Spring could be reversed by climatic and economic shocks](#)

A London-based think tank says the spread of democracy following the Arab Spring could be reversed because politicians are failing to help the countries involved to build resilience to economic shocks.

The group, E3G, says in a report, Underpinning the MENA Democratic Transition: Delivering Climate, Energy and Resource Security, that the G8 governments are not helping the Middle East-North Africa (MENA) region to address the threat of food and energy price shocks.

[Australia's record-breaking hottest summer](#)

January was the hottest month since records began in 1910 – it's getting hotter, and extreme heat is happening more often.

[Graves: Louisiana's coastal master plan can adapt to sea level rise](#)

New Orleans — Yes, we can. And, by the way: You're wrong. That's how Garret Graves, head of the Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, and some coastal scientists have responded to federal researchers who last week predicted the southeast coast faces the highest rate of sea level rise "on the planet" – 4.4 feet by 2100.

At that rate, they said, parts of the state's coastal Master Plan will be obsolete before they are completed.

"The NOAA folks are just misinformed," said Graves, summing up a point-by-point email rebuttal of the claims made by National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration staffers in a story by The Lens.

[Study of Ice Age Bolsters Carbon and Warming Link](#)

A meticulous new analysis of Antarctic ice suggests that the sharp warming that ended the last ice age occurred in lock step with increases of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, the latest of many indications that the gas is a powerful influence on the earth's climate.

[Apocalypse? No. But unless we change tack, the planet is running out of time](#)

After millennia of falsely predicting the apocalypse, humanity has become understandably flippant. There were so many threatened catastrophes in 2012, from rolling earthquakes to interstellar collisions and a misunderstanding of the Mayan calendar that the quips began to flow. "People are making apocalypse jokes like there's no tomorrow,' was a favourite.

But just because we've been wrong so many times before, does that mean we're safe forever? Or have we been lulled into a false sense of security, and do the timeframes involved disguise the scale of the risks posed to conditions for human civilisations?

[Why you should sweat climate change](#)

More American children are getting asthma and allergies, and more seniors are suffering heat strokes.

Food and utility prices are rising. Flooding is overrunning bridges, swamping subways and closing airport runways.

People are losing jobs in drought-related factory closings. Cataclysmic storms are wiping out sprawling neighborhoods. Towns are sinking.

This isn't a science-fiction, end-of-the-world scenario. Though more anecdotal than normal — today, at least — these scenes are already playing out somewhere in the United States, and they're expected to get worse in years ahead. In fact, a remaking of America is likely in our lifetimes — a flicker in geological time. This will transform how and where we live, work and play.

Massachusetts' climate will start to look more like North Carolina's, and Illinois will begin to feel like Texas. Montana's Glacier National Park, a glorious site that draws tourists from around the world, will likely lose its glaciers.



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