

# For a full investigation of those responsible for the disaster in Texas!

**Texas Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee**  
**24 February 2021**

The humanitarian disaster that has left millions of people without power, water and other essential services due to a winter storm in Texas has culprits—most immediately, the energy companies and the entire state government of Texas.

The very politicians and corporate giants who claim that schools must be open for in-person learning because it is in the best interests of the youth are responsible for the circumstances that directly led to the deaths of at least four Texas children last week due to hypothermia and house fires. Millions more have been traumatized by living for days without heat, water and adequate food. The body count of adults—the parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles of Texas’ schoolchildren—who died due to exposure or lack of access to water, is still rising. Rates of COVID-19 are expected to increase due to desperate people having to shelter together in an effort to survive.

Those who allowed this to happen do not care about children. They do not care about education. They care about their money, and no amount of human suffering is to get in the way of their pursuit of profits.

Even as thousands are still without basic resources and families confront home repair and power bills in the tens of thousands of dollars, school systems across the state are gearing up to force educators and children back into classrooms as quickly as possible.

The events of the last two weeks in Texas were predicted and entirely preventable. The dangers posed to the population by a deregulated power grid and a completely un-winterized energy supply system were well-known. The storm was accurately forecast in terms of its strength and severity. Yet, the grossly misnamed Electric Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT) falsely claimed it could handle the anticipated surges in demand as a result of the winter weather.

The most murderous lie—the fiction that kept many Texans in their homes instead of seeking alternate shelter ahead of time—was this: the blackouts would be issued on a rolling basis. The first warnings that went out to electricity customers indicated that power cuts would rotate on a 25-40 minute basis. Hours later, this was revised to two to three hours. By the next morning, millions woke up to find their electricity had gone out overnight. Finally, the power companies simply declared that they would get things up and running “as soon as possible.”

The Texas Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee insists on this: workers must mount an irreconcilable struggle against the private utilities, profiteering billionaires and government representatives responsible for this disaster. Their crime cannot go unanswered.

We demand:

1. A thoroughgoing investigation into the Texas power crisis conducted by elected representatives from workplaces and neighborhood rank-and-file committees. This includes an examination of the logic that guided the selection of where to throttle electricity and which zip codes or business districts were prioritized to have their lights stay on. Publicly available outage tracking data from the ONCOR website shows disproportionate concentrations of outages in working class zip codes, while the wealthiest areas and vacant buildings within commercial business districts maintained power.

2. The criminal prosecution of every individual, politician and corporation responsible for the Texas disaster.

3. The cancellation of all utility bills charged to household consumers during the crisis and the immediate return of any money already taken from

workers' bank accounts.

4. Full payment to Texans for food loss, flooding damage, burst pipes and damaged vehicles, to be paid for by expropriating the profits of the regional energy monopolies.

5. Immediate weatherizing of the existing electrical grid so it is sufficiently prepared for the increased demand during both heat waves and snowstorms, regardless of cost. The notion that it is too expensive to ensure that Texans are not placed in mortal danger from an unannounced and extended blackout is completely false; magnates within the industry are simply unwilling to incur costs in order to maximize profit.

6. The transformation of all power-based utilities (electricity, natural gas, coal, nuclear) and water systems into publicly-owned enterprises, managed and operated in the best interests of the population and society as a whole. It is already obvious that ERCOT, at the behest of the energy interests that steer its decision-making, will argue against the imposition of even the most limited mandatory requirements to secure the energy grid as an unacceptable intrusion by the federal government into the regional market.

Workers in Texas have witnessed firsthand the catastrophic result of private, independent, and deregulated utilities. It is incumbent upon us to ensure that disasters of this magnitude do not repeat themselves. The Texas Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee has been working since the summer to defend the lives of teachers, students and their families. The public relations assault on teachers in the drive to open up in-person schooling serves the same corporate bottom line pursued by ERCOT in its unwillingness to enforce basic measures to keep the power grid operating. Join the Texas Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee to carry forward this fight !



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