

Opinion

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EDITORIAL

Lawmakers should know the drill

Legislators shaft public by failing to show up for Marcellus shale meeting

It's like someone's drilling a hole in the ground — and wants to pull everyone into it with them.

Maybe that's not fair to describe the Marcellus shale drilling industry in that light.

But we are all naive if we trust our legislators to keep us from blindly falling for the promise of what lies in the dark depths below our feet.

Though our legislators have been working for years on regulating this industry, at times it appears they are no closer than they were at the outset.

One of those times occurred last week during a legislative interim session in Charleston.

A subcommittee was scheduled to vote to move a bill on Marcellus gas well regulation to the full joint Judiciary Committee. The room was packed with industry types, environmental advocates, property owners and media.

Everyone was interested in a dialogue and debate, and rationality. Everyone except a dozen legislators, who failed to show up for the meeting.

The scheduled two-hour session was adjourned within minutes when it was apparent the panel lacked a quorum of state senators.

We realize there may be some good excuses why eight of the 11 state senators on the subcommittee were no-shows. Admittedly, we did not ask the absent senators to explain themselves. Nor did we ask the four delegates, who were missing, their reasons, either.

But we figured they owed everyone an explanation.

More than a week later Sen. Clark Barnes, R-Randolph; Sen. Dan Foster, D-Kanawha; Sen. William Laird, D-Fayette; Sen. Joseph Minard, D-Harrison; Sen. Jack Yost, D-Brooke; Sen. Frank Deem, R-Wood; Sen. Jeff Kessler (an ex officio member); and Sen. Mike Hall, R-Putnam, are still mum.

Nor have we heard anything from Delegate William Wooton, D-Raleigh; Delegate Robert Schadler, R-Mineral; Delegate Patti Eagloski Schoen, R-Putnam; and Delegate Tim Manchin, D-Marion (a nonvoting member).

The ascendancy of the issue of Marcellus shale drilling is not the result of media or even the threat it poses, but of a very public, very loud debate ... outside Charleston.

The big push for public regulation of Marcellus shale drilling is not about isolated damage to a stream or someone's property, either; but the collective costs we may all face.

Widespread destruction of our waterways and land, despite the dividends, royalties or severance taxes, is wrong. It could cost our state dearly.

Regulated drilling will cost taxpayers less, and there's a good chance the state may come out ahead, if our legislators do what's right.

If they don't, there's a good chance we may end up in that hole, yet.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Grinch steals \$54 million from WVU

The Grinch is attempting to thwart the gift of innovation from WVU. After a cursory look, I found approximately \$54 million in research dollars WVU was to receive from the federal government in the form of "earmarks." The e-word has become the poster child for ending profligate federal spending. There is no doubt that spending does need to come under control and our debt does need to be reduced. Our elected representatives need to focus on reducing spending and debt that helps our country move forward to regain its formidable position in the world. Thwarting innovation is not the way.

Earmarks account for less than 1 percent of the federal budget. For saving less than 1 percent, earmarks are getting a lot of attention, but what is the real impact on our economy? We have all heard about pet projects and the bridge to nowhere, so there are flaws in the process. One thing that you rarely hear about is how earmarks can be effective for investing in innovation that advances knowledge, stimulates thinking and results in job creation. The combination of knowledge and creativity creates economic opportunities. In fact, this combination is what has kept north-central West Virginia from feeling the major impacts of the recession.

Research and development dollars for aviation safety, identification technology for national security, greenhouse gas emissions reduction, alternative fuels, advanced communication for mobile networks, enhanced law enforcement, threat detection, hydrogen fuel dispensing station and renewable power generation are but a few of the projects that will not be under the tree this year for WVU.

These types of projects are not bridges to nowhere, but are gifts of innovation that bridge novel research with the opportunity to contribute to the local economy and help solve major challenges we have as a country.

Brian Bell
GST Innovation Lab
Morgantown

Legislators should take drilling seriously

I was absolutely appalled to



LETTER TO EDITOR

MAIL LETTERS to the editor to *The Dominion Post*, 1251 Earl L. Core Road, Morgantown, WV 26505. E-mail letters to opinion@dominionpost.com. Include your name and phone number for confirmation purposes. Letters should not exceed 300 words.

If our legislators are not hearing our voices, then perhaps they are not taking this seriously enough ...

read in *The Dominion Post* (DP- Dec. 15) that less than half of the senators on the [joint] Judiciary Committee showed up to vote on the Marcellus shale bill.

From the article, it was clear that co-chair Sen. Herb Snyder, D-Jefferson, appeared. Which of the following state senators who are on this committee attended?

Or more to the point, which ones didn't show up? Which would be Sen. Clark S. Barnes, R-Randolph; Sen. Frank Deem, R-Wood; Sen. Dan Foster, D-Kanawha; Sen. Mike Hall, R-Putnam; Sen. William R. Laird IV, D-Fayette; Sen. Joseph M.

Minard, D-Harrison; Sen. Jack Yost, D-Brooke; and Sen. Jeffrey V. Kessler, D-Marshall, an ex officio member.

Last week, I sent a letter to each of these senators urging them to pass the comprehensive draft legislation on Marcellus shale drilling out of subcommittee and on to the full Legislature for further consideration in January.

I also sent a copy to my local legislators even though they are not on this committee because I wished to share my concerns with them.

I only heard back from one, Delegate Barbara Fleischauer, D-Monongalia. The others: Sen. Mike Oliverio, D-Monongalia; and Sen. Roman Prezioso, D-Marion; and delegates Bob Beach, Charlene Marshall and Alex Shook, all D-Monongalia, did not respond.

For those of us who are seriously concerned about the lack of regulation with the increasing impacts of Marcellus shale drilling in our state, we need to keep contacting our legislators.

If our legislators are not hearing our voices, then perhaps they are not taking this seriously enough to represent our wishes for adequate regulation of our natural resources.

If you wish further information on the impact of Marcellus shale drilling, and the consequences for not regulating it, visit: www.marcellus-wv.com.

Patricia Schaeffer
Morgantown

Will we be able to break China habit in time?

IT'S BEEN TOUGH watching fellow shoppers fill their carts with Chinese imports as the People's Republic stomps on American interests and values. At WalMart, Bed Bath & Beyond and other big chains, it's hard to find goods NOT-made-in-China. Lamps, popcorn makers, kitty scratch boards, Cuisinart toasters and Emeril cookware. Made in China.

My goodness! Drinking glasses from the Czech Republic. How did they get here? The fancier the store, the greater the chance of finding things not produced by 75-cents-an-hour labor. But even there ... I was looking through the bathrobes at an upscale department store, and every last one was made in China.

The creepy thing: China is not our friend, but it's become our keeper. America's Christmas trees groan with ornaments made in the country that lets North Korea threaten our troops



FROMA HARROP

and Asian friends. China supports the regime of the bizarre Kim Jong-il and his son, bent on strutting the world stage as a nuclear menace. China could close down the North Korean freak show tomorrow, but it won't because that would create a unified Korea allied with the United States. China doesn't want us to have strong ties in Asia.

Under the twinkling Christmas trees lie toys made in the place that imprisons a recent Nobel Peace Prize winner and threatened Norway (the Nobel's home) with economic retaliation. Beijing called the award to human rights

activist Liu Xiaobo an "anti-China farce." Eighteen other countries, intimidated by China or in cahoots with it, boycotted the ceremony. At the same time, China blocked its citizens' Internet access to reports on Liu and his prize.

Four years ago, the European parliament honored another jailed Chinese dissident Wei Jingsheng. Beijing accused it of committing "violent interference in China's internal affairs" and warned of harm to European interests. This is the country to which America has put itself in hock, mainly because we don't have the discipline to raise taxes and/or cut spending — and instead borrow from the Chinese.

Other than ruthlessness, China does have one strength that this country lacks: A leadership four-square behind modern science. While America's carbon cavemen question the need for green energy — going so far as trying to halt

California's efforts to promote it — China is full-speed-ahead assembling clean-power equipment (while expropriating the technology from others).

Make no mistake. China is an environmental disaster. It continues to build the most primitive coal-fired power plants, and its air is so bad that made-in-China smog drifts to our West Coast. But its dictators see the future, and so have opened the national treasury to industries making solar panels and wind turbines. They're also building high-speed passenger trains and rail lines. For a planned rail link between Beijing and Shanghai, one test train was clocked at over 300 miles an hour.

Long Island's Suffolk County is putting a solar energy farm at the Brookhaven National Laboratory and erecting solar panels over seven public parking areas. The panels for the parking lots

will come from China, as will many at the lab, with the rest also not-made-in-the-USA.

In one small but illustrative deal, the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority is buying a Chinese-built wind turbine to power a wastewater pumping station. Chinese manufacturers now hold nearly half the globe's \$45 billion market for wind turbines.

Meanwhile, a significant segment of our so-called conservative leadership slows progress on behalf of polluters — and drugs the American public with tax cuts financed by debt to China. As Beijing frustrates Washington's program to isolate Iran, Americans load their SUV trunks with Chinese tricycles, shirts and snow domes.

Makes you worry about our future. Makes you sad.

FROMA HARROP writes for the *Providence (R.I.) Journal*. She welcomes comments at fharpop@projo.com.

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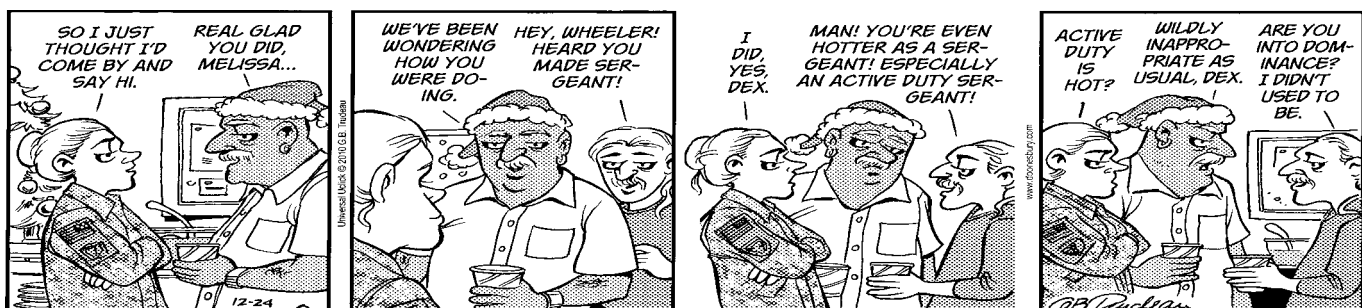
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We the People
The First Amendment
Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

"Peaceful protest displaces more violence than it triggers; free debate dissipates more controversy than it stirs."
Rodney A. Smolla
former dean, University of Richmond School of Law, 1991