



Written by [William P. Hoar](#) on March 9, 2020

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Correction, Please!

Progressives Plot Death of the Fracking Boom

Item: *The New York Times*, in its January 28 print edition, indicates that the Democrats have a “conundrum”: Should they ban hydraulic fracturing, better known as fracking, or win the presidency in such states as Pennsylvania? In these places, says a subtitle, there is “Rust Belt Resistance to a Progressive Ideal.”



“Climate change,” continues the left-wing paper, “has consistently polled as one of the top issues for Democratic primary voters, propelling Senators Sanders and Warren leftward even as the specific politics of fracking have gotten little airing. While Mr. Sanders and Ms. Warren push a nationwide fracking ban, other leading Democrats — Joseph R. Biden Jr., Pete Buttigieg, Amy Klobuchar and Michael R. Bloomberg — have held back, calling instead for tighter regulations, a ban on new oil and gas drilling leases on federal lands, and a transition away from natural gas over time. In critical pockets of the country, perhaps none more so than Pennsylvania, the issue of fracking could become vital in the general election, according to union leaders, Democratic politicians and Republican strategists.”

Item: An article for the news site Vox for January 15 presented the purported benefits of a fracking ban, as well as a few reasons against such action. The piece took note of Sanders’ call for a fracking ban and quoted him saying: “If we as a nation do not transform our energy system away from fossil fuel ... the planet we are leaving our kids will be uninhabitable and unhealthy.”

Fracking, the article emphasized, “keeps us dependent on fossil fuels and undermines decarbonization.” Meanwhile, “low oil prices driven in part by fracking have encouraged more travel.” And such low oil prices, maintained Vox, “undermined the business case for cleaner transportation alternatives, like electric cars and fuel cell-powered buses.”

Vox also cited disciples of green scripture, e.g., “‘Not only is natural gas dangerous and destructive, it’s increasingly unnecessary,’ said Michael Brune, executive director of the Sierra Club. ‘We do think there should be a national ban on fracking.’”

Item: The Hill for February 3 reported that legislation introduced “by Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) that Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-N.Y.) helped craft would ban fracking nationwide by 2025.... The legislation would immediately prevent federal agencies from issuing federal permits for expanded fracking, new fracking, new pipelines, new natural gas or oil export terminals and other gas and oil infrastructure.”

Correction: The wannabe savers of the globe do have big, bold action in mind. They are, however, hiding the fact that their desired world is going to revolve on taxes — *much higher* taxes. The additional levies will be required for the huge fossil-fuels revenues forfeited and hundreds of thousands of jobs lost if fracking is banned.



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There will be many other costs incurred. As Leslie Beyer, president of Petroleum Equipment and Services Association (PESA), has put it: Such a ban “would mean banning a technology that has bolstered us geopolitically, economically and environmentally.”

First, let’s summarize the process. Large amounts of natural gas and oil resources are located in shale formations in semi-porous or non-porous rocks. In the past, that did not allow the fuel to flow freely through conventional drilling.

This changed through the combination of advanced hydraulic fracturing and horizontal drilling. The process of fracking involves the high-pressure injection of water, chemicals and sand into shale deposits to create small cracks in the rock to release the gas and oil. With horizontal drilling, the initial penetration into the ground, as in traditional drilling, is done vertically. Then, as the name suggests, it turns horizontally to drill along the layer containing the fossil fuel.

In the early 2000s, horizontal drilling coupled with hydraulic fracturing became widely used to extract tight gas. Not long thereafter, that same combination of technologies was employed widely to extract tight oil. As explained by the American Petroleum Institute:

Safe hydraulic fracturing is the biggest single reason America is having an energy revolution right now, one that has changed the U.S. energy picture from scarcity to abundance. Fracking is letting the U.S. tap vast oil and natural gas reserves that previously were locked away in shale and other tight-rock formations. Up to 95 percent of natural gas wells drilled in the next decade will require hydraulic fracturing.

After fracking became practical, “Suddenly the U.S. and Canada each had 500 or 600 years or more of recoverable reserves,” as pointed out by Mario Loyola, a senior fellow at the Competitive Enterprise Institute.

Also recall that it wasn’t that long ago that “scarcity” was said to be inevitable. Our “liberal” leaders swore it to be so.

In 1977, President Jimmy Carter assured the nation that our energy future was dismal. In his words: “The oil and natural gas we rely on for 75 percent of our energy are simply running out. In spite of increased effort, domestic production has been dropping steadily at about 6 percent a year. Imports have doubled in the last five years. And our nation’s economic and political independence is becoming increasingly vulnerable.”

Not really. When the energies of the marketplace were allowed to work, the dark future become much brighter. Primarily because of the combination of horizontal drilling and hydraulic fracturing in shale formations, between 2005 and 2018, natural gas production in the United States increased by 69 percent. Over the same period and through the same processes, crude oil production in this country increased by 105 percent.

Nowadays, as summarized by economic commentator Steve Moore, Ohio and Michigan “have a combined total of more than 400,000 workers in the shale industry. Pennsylvania has another 320,000. Colorado and Florida each have more than 200,000 workers in oil and gas.”

However, left-wingers, including virtually all of the Democratic front-runners, can’t stand such prosperity. Some boast they would ban fracking immediately. Others would kill it through a thousand cuts of regulations and red tape. Executive orders would suffice if congressional assistance isn’t



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available.

Warren and Sanders, as noted, are among the prospective banners of fracking; some slower slayers also follow:

- Sanders would also ban drilling offshore and on federal lands, as well as banning imports and exports of fossil fuels. In addition, he would cancel oil pipelines already being built and halt the permitting of new fossil-fuel extraction, transportation, and refining infrastructure.
- Warren has vowed: “As president, I would issue an executive order on Day One banning all new fossil-fuel leases, including for drilling or fracking offshore and on public lands.” (As it happens, she and her husband for years reported income from natural gas royalties in Oklahoma. The assets were apparently, and conveniently, unloaded just before her Senate campaign in Massachusetts and transferred to their children, according to the *Wall Street Journal*.)
- Pete Buttigieg, an alleged “moderate,” wants to ban new fracking and is for “a rapid end to existing fracking.” There will be net-zero emissions by 2050 under his plan.
- Mike Bloomberg has told the *Washington Post* that the nation needs “a rapid phase-out of all fossil fuels in order to prevent the most catastrophic impacts of climate change.” Fracking, he explained to the left-wing paper, “should only be allowed where there are very strong health and environmental protections.”
- Joe Biden, during a December debate, was given a question by a *Politico* reporter about the “stints of explosive economic growth” enjoyed by recent presidents “due to a boom in oil and natural gas production.” Biden was asked if he would be “willing to sacrifice some of that growth, even knowing potentially that it could displace thousands, maybe hundreds of thousands of blue-collar workers.” Said Biden: “The answer is yes.” He also opposes new drilling on public lands and promises to “phase-out all fossil fuels.”

This is why Biden’s supporters, among others, are nervous in Pennsylvania and other areas. Fossil fuels mean many well-paying jobs. The progressive lieutenant governor in the Keystone State has acknowledged one of the outcomes of a fracking ban: “In Pennsylvania, you’re talking hundreds of thousands of related jobs that would be — they would be unemployed overnight,” in the words of John Fetterman. As a recent *New York Magazine* article observed: “In Western Pennsylvania, fracking hasn’t just brought back jobs; it has brought back good, unionized — and, in some cases, *six-figure* — jobs that don’t require a college degree.” (Emphasis in original.)

As fracking has grown in the United States, so too has renewable energy generation. But renewables are not an overall energy replacement, except as the figments of eco-dreamers.

In adapted excerpts from his recent book, *Elizabeth Warren: How Her Presidency Would Destroy the Middle Class and the American Dream*, David Bahnsen reminds us that renewables “account for just 18 percent of electricity production. Even the most delusional, optimistic projections about the growth of renewables don’t predict anything more than 35 percent of electricity needs being met by renewables for decades.”

Mark Mills, a senior fellow with the Manhattan Institute, similarly explained in “Real Clear Energy” that it takes “magical thinking to believe that shale production could be replaced quickly by wind and solar — at any price, and regardless of climate change motivations.” Mills puts this into perspective by noting



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that, since 2007, “American fracking technology has added 500 percent more energy to markets than have all of the planet’s wind and solar farms combined.”

Consider the fact that, as has been concluded by various economists, at least \$1 trillion of the economic output in the United States is related to the shale revolution. About \$548 billion of the growth in the Gross Domestic Product over the last 10 years is the direct result of fracking, according to a study by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. David Bahnsen calls this the equivalent of “adding the entire country of Sweden to our national economy in just a decade.”

How do such massive numbers translate locally? A study at the University of Chicago, examining the benefits and costs of shale development at the community level across nine different U.S. basins, determined that because of fracking the average household netted benefits of as much as \$1,900 per year.

In an interview with the *Wall Street Journal*, Sam Ori, executive director of the Energy Policy Institute at the University of Chicago, remarked that oil not recovered from fracked U.S. wells would be replaced in the world market by the world’s bad guys: Countries such as “Saudi Arabia and Russia would step in to replace lost U.S. supplies. The net impact on global carbon emissions would be negligible. They might even rise in the short term, because production in those countries is much dirtier than in the U.S.”

This is the real world.

Here’s a more realistic look, this from Harold Hamm, recently retired as the chief executive of Continental Resources (he is now executive chairman).

Though Hamm isn’t terrified of carbon dioxide — you know, that’s the stuff you and I exhale regularly — in a recent public letter, he observed that “clean-burning natural gas” has reduced CO2 emissions in the United States to levels “experienced in the early 1990s, yielding a 15% reduction in overall U.S. carbon emissions, more than any other country.

The energy sector, Hamm continued,

is creating tens of thousands of jobs and supporting tens of millions more. Domestic oil and gas production are filling states’ coffers with billions in tax dollars. Ask the Democratic governor of New Mexico how it has completely changed her state’s budget fortunes. It’s a story repeated in energy-producing states like North Dakota, Colorado, Oklahoma, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Ohio and Texas. Every state, every American, is -benefiting.

Yet almost the entire Democratic field for president wants to dismantle and destroy the industry that has done more for middle-class Americans than any other over the past 10 years. U.S. electricity costs are the envy of the industrialized world. Lower energy prices are like a progressive tax cut that helps the poorest households most. But Democrats would unravel all of it for a political purpose.

Save us from the greenish-tinged help of the climate-change cult. And do take a careful look at these theoretical redeemers. In that vein, we just perused the most recent “Mansions” section of the *Wall Street Journal*, which featured the various homes of the current Democratic front-runners. They include Warren’s two homes, Biden’s two, avowed socialist Sanders’ three, and Bloomberg’s nine (his with an estimated total value of more than \$100 million). Apparently you can tell who is an authentic environmentalist, because that is the one with an extra house in the country.



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