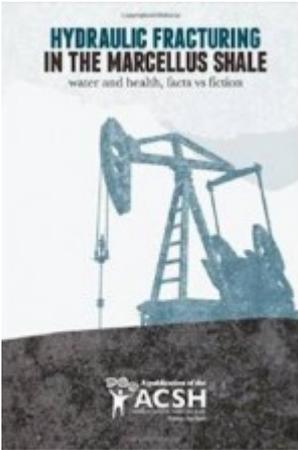


Denton, TX, birthplace of fracking, votes it off the island. So what?

By ACSH Staff — November 7, 2014



A relatively minor footnote to the major election news last Tuesday

occurred in a small college town in the vast oil and gas region known as the Barnett Shale. Not far from Dallas, Denton TX is known in some circles as the birthplace of the technology known by cognoscenti as high-volume hydraulic fracturing of shale to release and collect the entrapped natural gas and other fossil fuels. This method is more commonly known as fracking, an unfortunate choice of terminology that lends itself all-too-well to ridicule and condemnation based on...well, based on its name, mainly, and to a litany of concerns among a segment of our population fighting technology and progress.

According to [an article](#) ^[1] in the *New York Times* by Clifford Krauss,

The campaign in Denton captured national attention because no municipality in Texas had ever banned hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, and the city, which is a college town, sits on the northern edge of the Barnett shale field, one of the country's largest. The forces, led by a nurse and a philosophy professor in the city of 130,000, were outspent, but they won a commanding 59 percent of the vote with a campaign that emphasized the truck traffic, noise and air pollution brought by fracking.... [N]ationwide, local initiatives to ban or restrict the oil and gas production process lost as many elections as were won. Voters in Youngstown, Ohio, a Rust Belt city sitting atop vast deposits of natural gas, sent a proposed ban to a landslide defeat.

Later in that same article, the real impact of this debate over fracking comes to the fore:

An [economic renaissance](#) [2] is occurring in Ohio because of increased drilling in the Utica shale gas field and higher factory orders for steel pipe for drilling and transporting oil and gas. That may be why a proposed ban was defeated in Youngstown and the towns of Gates Mills and Kent voted down similar proposals. Unions backed the oil and gas industry on the measures, suggesting that they would cost jobs.

But the town of Athens, home of Ohio University, passed a ban, joining the Ohio communities of Yellow Springs, Oberlin, Mansfield and Broadview Heights, which previously passed such measures within their city limits.

We re starting to see momentum for anti-oil movements on campuses across the United States, and that is manifesting itself from divestment movements to anti-fracking bans, said Amy Myers Jaffe, executive director of energy and sustainability at the University of California, Davis.

And further important perspective comes from a [Reuters piece](#) [3] by Marice Richter:

The votes are not expected to have any meaningful impact on U.S. crude output, which has soared to a 25-year high. Most of the crude output in Texas comes...from the growing Eagle Ford and Permian fields to the south and west. [This vote is] essentially a ban on all drilling, said Ed Ireland, executive director of the Barnett Shale Energy Education Council, a group aligned with producers. No one would try to drill a well if they can't frack it. "

So let s see if we can put this situation and the vote in context with the real world, said ACSH s Dr. Gil Ross, after reviewing the various points noted above. A small college town votes to ban fracking within its borders. An activist at UC-Davis says that the anti-fracking movement seems to be gaining momentum at college campuses. The good folks of Denton, and likely elsewhere, are concerned not about the alleged water contamination and health impacts of fracking, as the initial anti-frackers asserted in 2010 but about common lifestyle issues related to increased industrial activity: noise, trucks, etc. And the energy experts say that banning fracking would have the effect of chilling all energy development in a region. Meanwhile, the people with real skin in the game those in the Ohio rust belt, overlying the vast Utica Shale are eager to have energy development, including fracking, in their blighted region, which has led to an economic rebound, just as it did in Pennsylvania, and is sorely missed in New York thanks to the Cuomo moratorium. In sum: nothing new here, college kids are alive with concern and protest over they know not what, and thanks to the Shale Gas Revolution, our nation s energy needs are far less fraught than only 5 years ago. And this ban will likely be overturned on several ground in the Texas courts.

For sound science-based discussions of **hydraulic fracturing**, see [ACSH s new publications](#) [4]!

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[1] http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/06/business/energy-environment/split-decision-by-voters-on-local-fracking-bans-.html?_r=0

[2] <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/09/business/an-energy-boom-lifts-the-heartland.html>

[3] <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/11/05/us-energy-texas-fracking-idUSKBN0IP1K120141105?via=newsletter&source=CSMorning>

[4] <http://acsh.org/2014/06/fracking-safe-efficient-path-energy-independence/>