

PUBLISHED: APRIL 8, 2011 12:01 AM EST  
 UPDATED: APRIL 7, 2011 11:18 PM EST

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## Kelly: Marcellus Shale development key to energy independence

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Say what you mean and mean what you say. If the people setting our national energy policies lived by that simple rule, our economy would be in much better shape, and the cost of oil -- topping \$106 per barrel last week -- would be a heck of a lot cheaper.

For years, we've heard Washington say that we need to reduce our dependence on foreign oil. Most Americans agree. As we've seen gas prices rise as the recent unrest in Africa and the Middle East unfolds, it's clear that our reliance on foreign sources of energy, especially from politically volatile parts of the world, is bad for our economy and our national security.

Washington knows this and has since the 1970s. So what is being done about it? Not enough.

What can be done? The answer is threefold: expand American energy production; stop government policies that

drive up gas prices; and create a strategy that increases all forms of American energy.

According to a recent Congressional Research Service report, if you combined America's natural gas, recoverable oil and coal resources, you would have an amount equivalent to 1.3 trillion barrels of oil, which would be larger than any other nation's holding in the world. America's vast supply of energy sources cannot only lead America toward true energy independence, but it can also be a source of job creation that will get Americans back to work and get our economy back on a pathway toward prosperity.

Part of this "above all" energy equation can be found right here in the 3rd District and throughout the commonwealth. Pegged by some as the "Saudi Arabia of natural gas," Pennsylvania has the potential to become one of the world's largest producers of natural gas. Through exploration and development of the Marcellus Shale formation, Pennsylvania could reap tremendous economic benefits that would create jobs that can't be outsourced, while raising revenue and producing energy to help fuel and grow our local and national economy.

In fact, reports have shown that for each mile of pipeline throughout the Marcellus Shale, nearly \$1 million is poured into Pennsylvania's economy. Additionally, for every \$1 invested in the state by Marcellus producers, \$1.90 in total economic output is generated. It's this kind of return on investment that energy policy makers should aspire to, especially as our nation continues to struggle with unacceptably high rates of unemployment and a \$14 trillion national debt that threatens our children's and grandchildren's future.

Right now, my colleagues and I on the Marcellus Shale Caucus are working together to address the immense benefits, as well as the potential and perceived risks, associated with further development of the Marcellus Shale. We will work to ensure that the well construction, drilling and the hydraulic fracturing processes associated with shale development are done in a way that respects our environment and protects us from the contaminants and pollutants that have plagued us in the past.

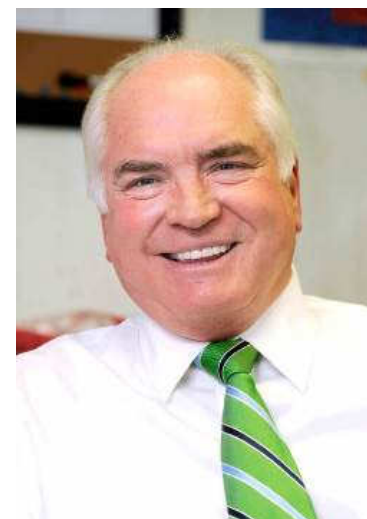
A recent report released from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection showed that, despite claims to the contrary, hydraulic fracturing does not threaten the safety of drinking water. This report flew in the face of efforts by some to quell the public's enthusiasm for Marcellus Shale development by invoking fear that was rooted more in fiction than fact.

While it's important that we closely oversee the energy development process, we can't let overregulation get in the way of our efforts to safely and responsibly harness our natural resources. For too long, the government has tied the hands of America's energy industries, sacrificing progress for the sake of protectionism. We can strike a balance that will both expand domestic energy production while keeping our environment safe if, and only if, we set aside our agendas and approach the table sincerely and honestly.

Since 2009, domestic oil production has dropped by 16 percent versus projected levels, and the Pacific Coast, Atlantic Coast and the Eastern Gulf have been placed off-limits to future energy production, sending rigs, along with the jobs and energy they produce, off our shores and onto foreign ones. In addition, the development of other sources of domestic energy has been stopped or stalled by overreaching and burdensome government regulations enforced throughout the country, including Pennsylvania, where, for example, coal mining drilling permits were recently blocked by the Environmental Protection Agency for no clear reason.

With this record, it's hard to accept that there's a real commitment to reducing our dependence on foreign sources of energy, no matter how often it's said.

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