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## Marcellus Shale forum draws 700

### Environment top topic by audience

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By Dan Majors, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Like the natural gas buried deep beneath Pennsylvania, the answers to the nation's energy questions can best be tapped after thorough work below the surface.

That was the thrust of the Energy Forum 2011 at the Heinz History Center on Monday, the first of three sessions discussing the balance of our energy and environmental needs.

More than 700 people attended the forum, sponsored by the Post-Gazette and Babst Calland, and submitted questions to the five panelists. Topics included the environmental impact of Marcellus Shale drilling, chemicals used in the fracking process, jobs created by the new industry, taxation and regulation.

"Nobody wants to do it right more than the companies that do it," said Ray Walker Jr., senior vice president of Range Resources and chairman of the Marcellus Shale Coalition. "Neither side has all the answers. Clearly, we have to work together. None of us wants to do something and look bad, 10 or 20 years from now."

Addressing the audience as "stakeholders in the discussion," Mr. Walker said the industry is young and opportunities numerous. "We all have to work together to reach a happy medium."

Post-Gazette executive editor David Shribman, who served as moderator of the forum, said he received more than 100 questions from the audience. Many of those focused on the environment.

John Hanger, former secretary of the state's Department of Environmental Protection, said there is an environmental upside to natural gas in that the nation's coal-fired plants are aging and must be addressed. Yet there is a risk of contamination.

"Those are perils that should not happen and can, with today's technology, be avoided," Mr. Hanger said. "There is a role for government to make sure that those perils are avoided."

Jan Jarrett, president and CEO of Citizens for Pennsylvania's Future, which works to protect the environment, agreed that the greater use of natural gas "might help us clean up our air" through the reduction of other "dirty fuels."

"Drilling can proceed safely," she said, urging the audience to "insist that Pennsylvania enact the highest standards for drilling in the country, and then take a zero-tolerance acceptance of violation of those standards. ... It's in the best interests of the industry itself.

"With good policies and fair and vigorous oversight of the industry, I think we can get to a place where the impacts are negligible."

She said it was important that Pennsylvanians "gain confidence in the industry and in government's regulation of it."

Lou D'Amico, president of the Pennsylvania Independent Oil and Gas Association, touted the industry's potential for working Pennsylvanians in the form of blue- and white-collar jobs.

"As a native of Pennsylvania," he said, "the economic impact is something I'm excited about. ... Industries tend to relocate and move toward resources. Clean gas will attract industries and those jobs."



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 PG VIDEO: AT THE FORUM

Ed Rubin, public policy professor at Carnegie Mellon University, fielded a question about what some see as a rush to develop the industry.

"There is no need to rush," he said. "The gas has been there a long time. It'll be there six months from now, it'll be there a year from now. I think it's critical that the development of this resource be done thoughtfully, carefully, safely and in a way that engenders public trust."

One member of the audience asked why Marcellus Shale drilling hasn't been stopped until all the questions about it are answered.

"The better question is, 'Can this move forward safely?' " Ms. Jarrett said. "The industry will always create challenges to regulators. ... In an ideal world, it would be great to stop for two years and figure it all out. But we don't live in an ideal world. We live in Pennsylvania."

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