

Pa. should help gas companies, not hinder them

By Gretchen Backer • October 22, 2010, 12:00 am

Pennsylvania legislators need to get their hands out of the pockets of the gas companies that are drilling in the Marcellus Shale. Finally there is a company, Cabot Oil & Gas Corp., that is willing to stand up for its operations and tell the government "enough already," and I support its efforts.

My husband and I live on Woodbourne Road in Dimock, Pa. Cabot is drilling a half-mile from our property line. Of course, we are concerned with preserving the health, safety and welfare of our citizens, and with protecting the environment. Cabot has been responsible and responsive to the issues of our neighbors.

Because of greed, the folks on Carter Road have not been forthright with the fact that there always has been methane in their water and the surrounding area. I think Cabot is doing a great job and is being a good neighbor by offering to recondition wells, drill new water wells and provide clean water when there is no definite proof that it was even the cause of the methane in the water.

We own The Inn at Montrose, so coupled with our concern with environmental protection is our interest in economic development. The effect that the natural gas industry is having on the local economy is immeasurable. Cabot is hiring people locally, using products and services purchased from local businesses, staying in our hotels and eating in our restaurants.

We have become friends with several Cabot workers, and we appreciate what they bring to the area. Pennsylvania and its residents are benefiting from the gas industry in several ways. One of our Cabot friends told us that Cabot has invested more than \$500 million here since 2006. I don't think there is another industry, including the school system, that can boast of that in Susquehanna County.

The government needs let Cabot continue with its mission. If this political positioning continues, I fear that Cabot may consider leaving the area and start exploring in West Virginia and Ohio, where state laws and regulations are more pro-business. Yes, all gas companies need to be regulated and operated safely. However, Pennsylvania state

agencies should be held in check and should be facilitating regulations for safe drilling practices and expediting permits to drill — not clogging the system with needless bureaucracy.

The state Department of Environmental Protection has gone off the deep end by forcing emergency funding for an unnecessary water line extending from Montrose to Dimock. Where are the feasibility studies and environmental studies? Where will this line run, through landowners' properties as eminent domain, or down Route 29, thereby tearing up the road? Will we be forced to hook up to the water line to the tune of \$3,000 per hook-up? Can Lake Montrose handle this big government-enforced solution of a water line? I know for a fact that the Pennsylvania state budget won't be able to handle a \$12 million bill if Cabot wins the lawsuit and Pennsylvania residents have to pay for this solution.

Is DEP Secretary John Hanger pushing this water line because Montrose wants water to be supplied to the jail, which happens to be located between Montrose and Dimock, or is it to clean up the Superfund site of multiple houses and businesses affected by the Bendix chemical spill that occurred years ago? These questions need to be answered.

I applaud Cabot, and hope others will, too, for standing up to our government, which so often goes unchecked.

Backer is a Dimock, Pa., resident.



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