

Six Reasons to Ban Fracking in Illinois

Hydraulic fracturing (“fracking”) is a reckless drilling technique used to extract oil and natural gas from shale rock and other geographic formations. It requires drilling down to the targeted rock formation, typically drilling sideways through the layer of rock, and pumping millions of gallons of water mixed with chemicals and a proppant under extreme pressure to fracture (or “frack”) the rock. The proppant, most commonly sand, keeps the fractures ajar, enabling oil or natural gas to flow up the well. The entire process is dangerous and results in air pollution, drinking water contamination, public health problems, and earthquakes, and contributes to climate change. Instead of opening the state of Illinois up to fracking and its dubious economic benefits, Governor Pritzker should ban fracking in Illinois and invest in 100 percent renewable energy.

1. Fracking endangers the environment and communities: Fracking to extract oil and gas from underground rock formations damages the local environment and endangers public health near the drilling site.¹ Methane, fracking fluids and wastewater contaminate water supplies and imperil the livelihoods of farmers that rely on clean water.² Increased truck traffic and drilling emissions reduce air quality; methane leaks contribute to climate change; and the proliferation of oil and gas infrastructure destroys

pristine landscapes and related tourism and recreation industries.³ Truck accidents, spills, well blowouts and leaks can release hazardous fracking chemicals into nearby freshwater bodies, jeopardizing farmland and private property.⁴

2. Secret, risky chemicals in fracking fluid: Fracking injects large volumes of highly pressurized water, sand and chemicals deep underground to fracture rock formations and release tightly held oil and gas. States regulate fracking, but most allow oil and gas companies to withhold the identity of chemicals used, because they are “trade secrets.”⁵ According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, companies refuse to disclose about 11 percent of the chemicals used during fracking.⁶ Of the known chemicals, 14 are known or possible human carcinogens, and many are linked to developmental health and reproductive problems.⁷

3. Toxic, radioactive wastewater: Some of the chemical-laced water used to frack a well returns to the surface as wastewater. In addition to the original fracking fluids, potentially dangerous levels of harmful underground contaminants and radioactive material



are brought to the surface.⁸ These chemicals can cause cancer, disrupt the endocrine system, affect the nervous, immune and cardiovascular systems, and affect sensory organs and the respiratory system.⁹

- 4. Fracking causes earthquakes:** Fracking and the disposal of wastewater via underground injection are linked to manmade earthquakes.¹⁰ The fracking-targeted New Albany Shale formation that covers much of southern Illinois overlaps major fault systems and two primary seismic zones: the New Madrid Seismic Zone (NMSZ) and the Wabash Valley Seismic Zone (WVSZ).¹¹ The NMSZ is responsible for some of the largest seismic events in central and eastern North America.¹² It already has about 200 small earthquakes annually, and a 2014 study found that accumulating tectonic stress could result in a sizeable earthquake there.¹³ The WVSZ is the second most active seismic zone in the central United States, with the ability to generate recurrent large-scale earthquakes between 7 and 7.8 Richter magnitude.¹⁴ These two seismic zones already contain multiple nuclear power plants, nuclear storage facilities and gas pipelines that could be damaged by a fracking-caused earthquake, potentially releasing radiation and toxic pollution.¹⁵
- 5. Drillers seize private property and mineral rights:** Frackers commonly use a contentious legal tool known as “forced pooling” to force resistant landowners to submit to drilling.¹⁶ Under current Illinois

law, oil and gas companies can impose drilling on landowners if more than half of neighboring properties have agreed to gas or oil leases.¹⁷

- 6. False jobs promises:** The energy industry deceptively promotes fracking as an engine for economic and job growth, but the job creation estimates have sometimes been overestimated by nine-fold.¹⁸ Almost all fracking jobs are short-term, occurring during the drilling phase; they often are filled by out-of-state workers.¹⁹ The real future of energy prosperity in Illinois lies with clean, renewable power (like solar and wind) and energy efficiency manufacturing and installation. Today, three times more Illinois workers are employed in these renewable energy and efficiency sectors than in fossil fuels (97,633 jobs and 32,668 jobs, respectively).²⁰

Conclusion

Even though Governor J.B. Pritzker ran for office on a clean energy platform, he has failed to protect citizens from the destructive practice of fracking through a statewide ban. The practice of fracking poses unacceptable risks to people and the environment, and allowing it in Illinois would be a dirty deal in an age where climate change poses the largest threat ever known by humankind. Instead of doubling down on fossil fuels like natural gas, Illinois should invest in a fair and just transition to 100 percent renewable energy.

Take action! Contact Governor Pritzker today: call 877-829-8237 and urge him to ban fracking in Illinois!

Endnotes

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