

Kathy Cooper

From: ecomment@pa.gov
Sent: Friday, July 24, 2020 11:06 AM
To: Environment-Committee@pasenate.com; IRRRC; environmentalcommittee@pahouse.net; regcomments@pa.gov; ntroutman@pasen.gov; timothy.collins@pasenate.com; gking@pahousegop.com
Cc: c-jflanaga@pa.gov
Subject: Comment received - Proposed Rulemaking: Control of VOC Emissions from Oil and Natural Gas Sources (#7-544)

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The enclosed comment was received as part of the following testimony:

Testimony name: Public Hearing 2 - Proposed #7-544
Testimony date: 6/24/2020 12:00:00 AM
Testimony location: WebEx

Re: eComment System

The Department of Environmental Protection has received the following comments on Proposed Rulemaking: Control of VOC Emissions from Oil and Natural Gas Sources (#7-544).

Commenter Information:

Dave McCollough
(dpmccollough@comcast.net)
78 Jean Lo Way
York, PA 17406 US

Comments entered:

Oral comments given at 24 June 2020 hearing. See emailed written comments below:

My name is Dave McCullough. I'm an Evangelical Pastor who served Congregations in PA for 44 years. I'm now a partner and volunteer leader with another evangelical group, LCBC Church with 15 campuses across PA and a following of more than 30,000 thousand. I speak as a concerned citizen.

According to highly reputable sources, Pennsylvania's natural gas and oil wells annually emit more than a million tons of methane gas and other volatile organic compounds into the air we breathe. This is substantially more than the amount reported to DEP. Current laws provide so many loop holes manipulated by the industry that accuracy in official reporting is both laughable and irresponsible. The air we breathe in Pennsylvania is among the most heavily polluted in

America. It poisons the air of nine of our largest cities and a multitude of small towns. The consequence of this irresponsible condition is that the most vulnerable citizens of our state are subjected to serious health issues and early death. It's a scientific fact that unborn children near natural gas operations are more likely to sustain brain, spine, or spinal cord defects than children in healthier regions of the country. I speak as grandfather of two grandsons graduating from Penn State. The oldest has struggled from birth with severe asthma; and the other with Asperger Syndrome. There's no history of either in our families; but I served large congregations in Clearfield, Bellefonte, Montoursville, and York where their mother, our daughter, grew up. Furthermore, these emissions are primarily responsible for global climate change. A consequence is a substantially lengthened tick season and therefore Lyme Disease. Regrettably, our daughter, the mother of these fine young men and a ten year old has suffered severely from Lyme Disease for six years—having frequently come near death. Last November, this Summa Cum Laud graduate of Indiana University of Pennsylvania suffered a major stroke. Hershey Medical Center doctors gave us no hope, but thousands entreated God in her behalf. She is 90% recovered & returned to her career as an accountant; but her surgeon believes the treatment for Lyme Disease played a big role in causing the stroke.

I have close friends among ethnic minorities. It's a fact that such minorities tend to live in heavily polluted communities. The hazard to their families is even greater than mine. But they have little choice. It's what they can afford and where our culture permits.

The fossil fuels industry is doing today what the tobacco industry did years ago in spending millions to influence law-makers with misrepresentations to justify poorly designed laws. Two years ago, I made an appointment with my state senator to share concerns about such matters. He listened and then assured me the cause of pollution in PA is "cloud seeding." He insisted pollution would not be a problem if we just banned the seeding of clouds. I wondered what lobbyist got to him on that one. I will be 73 in a few weeks and have been a Republican all my voting life; but that was too much. I am a conservative evangelical follower of Jesus. But I'm not an idiot! Nor am I a Republican anymore.

I believe strongly in the separation of Church and State. Given the tragic history of religious groups controlling government, I value our Constitution and the right of all citizens to participate in the formation of laws that govern us. Nonetheless, this is a moral issue on which every religious persuasion can agree.

I support the Pennsylvania DEP standard entitled Control of VOC Emissions from Oil and Natural Gas Sources.

BUT, I urge DEP to include requirements for low-producing wells that are responsible for much of the Methane pollution from gas & oil wells in PA.

And I urge frequent inspections be required to control leaking in all wells; and removal of the clause that permits operators with a previous record of rare leaks to justify a reduction in inspection frequency. Massive emissions can happen anytime without warning or case history.

Thank you.

No attachments were included as part of this comment.

Please contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,
Jessica Shirley

Jessica Shirley
Director, Office of Policy