

MEMORANDUM

TO: All House Members

FROM: D. Milne

RE: Promoting the Natural Gas Sector by Enhancing Public Safety Communications

DATE: March 28, 2012

Please join me in cosponsoring legislation to require DEP, PEMA and county Emergency Management Organizations in Pennsylvania to promulgate regulations to implement constant real-time safety-monitoring and communications with each natural gas well in the Commonwealth. The purpose of such directive would be to better ensure the safety and security of the public as the natural gas sector continues to grow in the state, as well it should. The methodology for doing so is feasible and cost-effective via implementation of a wireless mesh network (WMN). Simply put, a WMN allows electronic communication to take place at sites where there is no access to the Internet.

Natural gas extraction and the transportation thereof require unique communications needs that must be met in order to maximize public safety considerations. Specifically, once wells are drilled, they remain largely unmanned during their useful service life. More than 5,000 wells and thousands of miles of pipeline related to Marcellus Shale development already are planned in Pennsylvania. Most of these wells and miles of pipeline will be rurally-sited and unmanned. This means this type of infrastructure will be sited in parcels with limited, off-the-grid communication systems and power supplies, and generally a lack of full-time data streams. However, as the Gulf oil spill last year, among other examples, made abundantly clear, a critical need exists for real-time reporting of incidents such as leaks, system failures and other damage to critical infrastructure involved in drilling operations.

To improve communications and therefore public safety, as well the efficiency of natural gas extraction itself, the installation of WMNs that provide constant monitoring and communications with each well platform is necessary. These meshed networks would enable constant communications with state and county agencies and emergency service networks. Because of the nature of this kind of data-streaming, all information will be equally and automatically available to both well operators and state and county regulators.

Quite critically, this real-time alerting capability will also provide assurance to the public that the natural gas industry is acting safely and has the public's best interest in mind. It would exemplify the very best of corporate social responsibility, which is a pro-business concern and position. This approach also will appeal, obviously, to pro-environmental interests. Best of all, in these challenging economic times, wireless meshed networks can be done in a very cost-effective fashion.

As you know, the benefits that will incur to the Commonwealth and its citizens because of natural gas extraction are clear. However, it remains vitally important that such operations be safe, clean and efficient. Having WMN technology designed to ensure safe and efficient operations would further the success of the natural gas industry in Pennsylvania, resulting in continued job growth and augmenting the state's revenue base.

Co-sponsorship opportunities are available by contacting Lori Losch at 787-8579 or via email llosch@pahousegop.com.