

May 20, 2010

Mr. Chairman I would like to thank you for taking the time to hear my thoughts and concerns with the drilling of the Marcellus Shale in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

My name is Dennis Eicker I'm the President of The International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local Union #5, we take in 22 counties in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania from the West Virginia state line to the New York state line. I have held a full time position in the IBEW Local 5 for the past 20 years I represent 3000 workers in the electrical field of which 95% work in the construction industry.

I'm also the Sectary Treasure of The Pittsburgh Regional Building Trades which takes in 6 counties in Southwestern Pennsylvania and it represents 45,000 men and women and roughly 23 various Unions. These are good paying jobs with Health care, pensions and sick benefits.

Three years or so back when I first heard that they would be drilling for gas in Pennsylvania I thought OK they'll drill a few wells as they done in the past tie it into a pipe line and run it through a pump station send it on its way and that's, that.

Well that was a few years ago now after attending numerous meetings, and attending some half dozen conferences and hearing countless speakers on this topic of Marcellus Shale it has grown to the point I can't put my arms around it and growing faster than anything I've ever seen I compare it to the great gold rush. Last evening on KDKA news they stated that 1500 wells have been drilled in Pennsylvania and they have applied for permits on 3000 more.

As I speak to you a well is being drilled 230 yards from my house around the clock the equipment runs I have no problem with it this is progress.

Every day I pick up the paper and there's an add ½ page and even full page color from one of the gas company's telling us how great it is for Pennsylvania. I have found that if someone must tell me how good something is for me I have to question is it?

Standing before you I'm not pointing any fingers nor will I mention any names at this time. I would like to express my views as to the way I see this unfolding.

April 20th of this year I attended a Marcellus Shale conference at the Westin Convention Center Hotel. I listened to numerous speakers explain some of the problems they are facing such as roads, handling the water after they fracture a well, the pipe lines that are needed to gather the gas to the point of pumping 8.7 Billion cubic feet a day. Training the people to work on these well sites and plants to process the gas. Some even stated this could be the largest gas discovery in the world to date and they will be here for years to come.

I listened to people state that they needed well trained workers in all fields to build processing plants and pump stations.

One gentleman that spoke stated there aren't enough Hotels and Motels and we'll have to build trailer cities that will house the workers needed to work on these sites.

Another person made the statement and I quote "I can't believe with all this work to take place, some jobs will surly go to Pennsylvania workers."

I bumped into a politician at this conference and stated my concerns. I stated we need strong and good regulations and need an extraction tax of some kind to protect Pennsylvania workers. This person stated " we don't want to drive these Companies out of the state."

My reply was my people do not need Motels, Hotels or Trailers cities we have a place to sleep it's called home where we live eat, raise our children, pay our taxes and vote. That gas has been down there for a Billion years and if the people of Pennsylvania can't get a good paying job out of it I don't care if we do drive them out of the state that gas will still be there. We did not worry about driving the Garming people out of the state at 50 Million dollars just for the license plus taxing of the money they bring in. I can tell you building the Casino's were good paying jobs with full benefits.

We also must keep in mind that every job that is performed by an out of state contractor and worker that money leaves this state for good. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania needs all the help we can get at this time.

The Alaskan Pipeline was finished in June 20,1977 to this day the people of Alaska are benefiting from the oil flowing in that line can we learn something from this?

Mr. Chairman I have about 450 people out of work at this time they have had 5 years of training to become a Journeyman-Wireman we are already trained and ready to go to work. The Pittsburgh Building Trades with all trades have roughly 7000 people off at this time and are all trained. We all have an obligation to get these men and women back to work.

We must protect our environment at all cost with all our rivers and streams hills and valley's our topography is not the average landscape. In the Observer-Reporter May 15, 2010 it stated a fine was levied because of a spill into a tributary of Bush Run Creek that killed fish and aquatic life. Let's not forget the spill in Little Dunkard Creek and the large fish kill there.

I would like to close by reading to you from this past Sunday's Observer-Reporter May 16, 2010 just two paragraph's wrote by George Block he wrote. Each morning, I pick up the Observer-Reporter and read about the terrible tragedy taking place in the Gulf of Mexico. Who's to blame? One must always remember that Pennsylvania's constitution sates that the natural resources even from an esthetic point of view belong to all of the people including those to come. Witness what is going on in the gulf and ask yourself should we allow drilling next to a school?

The Citizens and the Environment of Pennsylvania need all the help we can get.

Hello, my name is Barry Zaffuto of the Pennsylvania Game Commission and we would like to thank Representative Levandansky for this opportunity to offer testimony on HB 2443.

I am the Habitat and Land Management Supervisor for the Southwest Region with responsibility for over 207 thousand acres of State Game Land and wildlife habitat management and protection in the 10 county SW Region, which includes Washington County.

The Game Commission has the responsibility to manage all mammals and birds, both game and non-game, and the protection of their habitats, especially those of threatened, endangered, and species of special concern within the Commonwealth. Concerns affecting wildlife are elevated by Marcellus gas exploration, especially wildlife habitats on public and private lands, which in turn increase the Agency's need for oversight to safeguard these issues.

Concerning HB 2443, it is important to note that the Game Commission is an independent agency and does not receive any tax revenue from the state of Pennsylvania. We are primarily funded through the sale of hunting and furtaking licenses. We also get income from the sale of timber, coal and gas from our lands, where we own them. These lands, nearly 1.5 million acres were primarily acquired by Sportsmen through funding made possible through their purchase of hunting licenses. It is important to note that although we own 1.5 million surface acres, we do not own the gas/oil and/or mineral rights on much of this land.

Although our Board, the eight-member Commission that governs our operations, has not yet taken an official position on HB 2443, the Agency does look forward to ways of increasing our revenues, and supports the idea of a revenue stream as outlined in this Bill. This is important in this instance because we are really spending a lot of time and money due to the recent discovery and extraction of shale gas. I, my staff and many other employees of the Commission have been overwhelmed in the past two years attempting to keep up with this workload and keep some semblance of order and completion of our regular duties and mandates. In the SW Region, this workload has been generally in Greene and Washington Counties, but in the past two weeks, we have been reviewing sites on Game Lands in several other SW Counties, as gas developers have notified us of their intent to drill on these game lands as well.

It is important to note that although we have several completed Marcellus well sites on game lands in Greene and Washington, none of them or proposed future locations are in locations where the Commission is the owner and/or in control of the Natural Gas. My staff must basically re-arrange their schedule to review the sites, tally and attempt to recover any damages such as timber. I or other personnel in the agency must review the deeds and other documents to assure that we do not indeed own the gas and to interpret exactly what rights and privileges are outstanding and under control of the developer. Doug Dunkerley, the land manager for Greene/Washington/Beaver and Allegheny will attest that this currently takes the majority of his time, as it does mine. Remember that after the gas is recovered, it must be moved through a pipeline, which at times creates additional impacts and a tremendous amount of staff time to address. We also review the permits of all wells, on and off of the game lands, for impacts on all wildlife and their habitats through a PNDI (Pennsylvania Natural Diversity Index) alert or "hit", and respond accordingly, again taking valuable staff time. We have had to shuffle priorities within the agency to apply the proper resources to handle these situations. We do know that there are many - very stressed employees presently within the agency trying to accomplish this unanticipated workload.

This is especially true due to the fact that we are holding over 100 vacancies in our agency of only 700 employees at full strength. 15 of these vacancies come from within my operation which at full strength numbers 40, and we are the primary respondents to these developments. Hopefully you can now understand why the Agency looks forward to a possible revenue source.

We look at the Game Commissions' portion of the proposed separation tax as detailed in HB 2443 as a way for the industry to pay its own way to mitigate the effect it will have on wildlife and wildlife habitat both on private and public lands, now and in the future. Presently, the sportsmen are entirely funding these expenditures through their purchase of hunting and furtaking licenses and the investments that they made in land from past hunting license sales.

If HB 2443 does not pass and/or a version does pass that does not include a provision for a dedicated amount of the severance tax to go to the Commission, these sportsmen will continue to fund this burden, which unfortunately takes away from the Agencies ability to perform many present and future programs for wildlife, youth and sportsmen. This is unlike general fund agencies such as DEP and DCNR who can have their budgets augmented from the general fund to deal with their increased workloads due to gas recovery activities.

Hopefully, through my testimony here today, the Legislature, Sportsmen, wildlife enthusiast and the Public will become aware of the impacts to the Pennsylvania Game Commission and will support HB 2443 and its provision to provide funding to the Game Fund to help us manage the impacts of increased drilling activity and excel at providing programs to benefit wildlife, the environment, youth, Sportsmen and the Public.

For wildlife and conservation, we again thank you for the opportunity to offer this testimony.

Barry S. Zaffuto
PA Game Commission, Southwest Region
4820 Route 711
Bolivar, PA 15923
724-238-9523