



**Dennis
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VIEWPOINT

Fracking won't hurt environment

Fear just secured another victory.

Under pressure from green activists, the Florida Senate just voted down a bill that would have helped expand fracking, the drilling process used to extract oil and natural gas from deep underground. Activists recycled discredited arguments to scare citizens and legislators into believing fracking will harm Florida's environment.

If alarmism were a crime, these radicals would be wearing handcuffs. Fracking won't damage the environment, but it will boost the Sunshine State's economy; create more jobs; and help secure American energy independence for the good of all.

Here are the facts: Fracking is already legal in Florida — the now-dead legislation would have formally authorized and allowed the state to regulate it. Such regulations would have ensured the state could carefully monitor every aspect of the process — including water safety and waste management.

Though recent technological advancements have made fracking more productive and widespread, the basic technique was first authorized during the Truman administration, nearly 70 years ago. Fracking involves drilling wells deep underground — far below water aquifers — and then pumping in a mixture of water and sand at high pressure to flush out and capture gas and oil trapped in tight rock formations.

Green activists ignore fracking's impeccable safety record when they claim the technique would contaminate water supplies. One representative from the South Florida Wildlands Association warns, "You're putting chemical explosives underground and setting them off ... There's always strong potential for contamination of both underground water supplies and surface water supplies."

That line of reasoning might seem logical. But the Environmental Protection Agency itself has repeatedly disproven such allegations.

A study released by the EPA just last year concluded that the process leaves no toxins in water supplies. Since the 1940s, there have been over one million wells drilled for fracking, without a single confirmed case of groundwater contamination.

While fracking won't damage the environment, it will set America on the road to energy independence.

Thanks to fracking, America recently surpassed Saudi Arabia as the world's leading oil producer. In 2014, the country recorded its largest ever jump in crude oil production — an astounding increase of 1.2 million barrels per day, bringing total U.S. production to 8.7 million barrels a day.

Instead of having to import oil from rivals such as Russia, America increasingly relies on its own homegrown energy. Total U.S. oil imports have sunk to levels unseen since 1995.

Moreover, fracking can energize Florida's job market. Fracking has spurred the creation of 2.1 million jobs nationwide.

And it will help support 3.9 million positions by 2025.

State legislators have fallen for activists' disproven claims. Fracking in Florida can strengthen both America's energy security and the Sunshine State's economy.

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