

# EPW Oversight of Hydraulic Fracturing:

*Time and again, despite environmental political agendas, hydraulic fracturing continues to be practiced safely, and best regulated by the states - the principal reason for the energy revolution in the United States.*

**January 13, 2015**



**Majority Staff Timeline  
United States Senate  
Committee on Environment  
and Public Works  
114<sup>th</sup> Congress**

**“This short compilation highlights oversight efforts of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee holding the Environmental Protection Agency accountable for its work and public statements concerning hydraulic fracturing. The combination of hydraulic fracturing and horizontal drilling has led to the revolution of shale gas and oil in the United States, causing the United States now to be the world’s largest producer of natural gas and oil. This revolution sets the United States toward real energy independence within the next five to 15 years according to the Energy Information Administration, and this combination does so with less of a footprint on our environment than former conventional drilling techniques. The oil and natural gas industry has been a principal foundation for economic recovery creating jobs, investments in our communities, and national energy security despite the Obama administration’s best efforts to thwart their progress. All of these tremendous benefits have come as study after study from government agencies and academia – including the Clinton and Obama Environmental Protection Agencies – have shown that hydraulic fracturing is safe and when done responsibly poses minimal if any threat to our environment. Continued efforts to confuse the public about hydraulic fracturing and its decades old track record of safety by radical environmental activists, and most recently even EPA’s own Science Advisory Board, are directly contradicted by this overwhelming preponderance of evidence, motivated by politics rather than science, and should be ignored. The Senate EPW Committee will continue to hold this administration accountable through continued oversight and do our part to continue the American energy revolution.”**

*- U.S. Sen. Jim Inhofe (R-Okla.), chairman of the U.S. Senate Environment and Public Works (EPW) Committee*

## **Background of EPW Committee’s oversight of the Obama Administration’s attacks on hydraulic fracturing conducted by Sens. Inhofe and David Vitter (R-La.) since 2009:**

On [Jan. 7, 2016](#), Inhofe released a statement regarding the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality’s (DEQ) draft final report on domestic water wells in Pavillion, Wyoming. Wyoming DEQ’s December 14, 2015, [report](#) reaffirms the findings of federal and state officials discrediting the 2011 Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) draft study on the same issue. This report further bolsters EPA’s finding that hydraulic fracturing “has not led to widespread systemic impacts on drinking water resources” and highlights why the Agency should ignore calls by its Science Advisory Board (SAB) to include debunked unscientific assessments in its final water study.

On [Dec. 7, 2015](#), Inhofe sent a letter to Gina McCarthy, administrator of EPA, raising concerns over EPA’s application of the social cost of methane (SCM) in EPA’s proposed rule for methane emissions from the oil and gas sector.

On [Aug. 18, 2015](#), Inhofe released a statement on EPA’s proposed methane regulations to stifle the U.S. oil and gas industry.

On [June 11, 2015](#), Inhofe led a group of Senate Republicans in a letter to President Obama opposing new federal mandates regulating methane emissions from the oil and natural gas sector.

On [June 4, 2015](#), Inhofe provided a statement after EPA released a report on hydraulic fracturing again confirming the extraction process has ‘not led to widespread, systemic impacts on drinking water resources.’

At an [April 14, 2015](#), EPW subcommittee hearing, Inhofe questioned Inspector General Arthur Elkins, Jr. of the EPA on its investigation into states’ ability to regulate hydraulic fracturing.

On March 20, 2015, [Inhofe introduced](#) S. 828, *The Fracturing Regulations are Effective in State Hands (FRESH) Act*, which would recognize hydraulic fracturing as a commercial practice and keep regulations under state management.

On February 12, 2015, [Inhofe introduced](#) S. 490, the *Federal Land Freedom Act of 2015*, which would give states the authority to establish programs to lease, permit, and regulate the development of all forms of energy resources, including renewables, on federal lands within their border.

On [October 23, 2014](#), the Senate EPW Committee Minority Staff released a report, [Setting the Record Straight: Hydraulic Fracturing and America’s Energy Revolution](#), which uncovers the truth behind the science and economic benefits of hydraulic fracturing. The report also exposes the depth of the Obama administration’s war on oil and natural gas development.

On [October 2, 2014](#), Inhofe sent a letter to Inspector General Arthur Elkins, Jr. of the EPA raising concerns over its investigation into states’ ability to regulate hydraulic fracturing.

In October 2014, the Groundwater Protection Council (GWPC), a nonprofit organization comprised of state regulatory agencies focused on the protection of water resources, released a [comprehensive report](#) highlighting the cutting edge oil and natural gas regulatory structures of states, including those concerning hydraulic fracturing. The review concludes that “In step with dramatic industry growth over the past five years, states have substantially improved groundwater protection laws and regulations governing oil and natural gas production.” The GWPC also runs a chemical disclosure registry on hydraulic fracturing,

which can viewed by [clicking here](#). The GWPC also runs a disclosure registry of hydraulic fracturing chemicals.

On [May 8, 2014](#), Senate Republicans from EPA's Region 6 sent a letter to Inspector General Arthur Elkins, Jr. of the EPA asking the IG to halt its unnecessary investigation into states' ability to regulate hydraulic fracturing, which was well beyond the IG's expertise and authority.

On [February 26, 2014](#), Senate Republicans from EPA's Region 6 sent a letter to Inspector General Arthur Elkins, Jr. of EPA's office of the IG with concerns about the quality and integrity of the OIG report, which investigated EPA's Region 6's issuance and withdrawal of an emergency order aimed at Range Resources, an oil and gas company operating in Parker County, Texas.

On [June 20, 2013](#), Inhofe and Vitter released the following statements after EPA ended its politicized investigation into a hydraulic fracturing project near Pavillion, Wyoming because its initial assessment lacked a basis in credible science.

On [Jan. 17, 2013](#), Inhofe and Vitter sent a letter to then-EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson, questioning EPA's procedural and scientific shortcomings in conducting the draft Pavillion report.

On [Sept. 28, 2012](#), a bipartisan group of Senators sent a letter to EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson expressing concern that EPA is expanding its definition of diesel fuels in its draft permitting guidance for oil and natural gas hydraulic fracturing activities in an effort to gain more federal control over the hydraulic fracturing process.

On [July 25, 2012](#), EPA declared that the well water in Dimock, Pennsylvania is safe to drink and requires no further testing.

On [June 29, 2012](#), Inhofe released a statement following the Sierra Club's announcement that former EPA Region 6 Administrator Al Armendariz was hired by the Sierra Club to be the Campaign Representative for the organization's Beyond Coal campaign. Inhofe predicted that Dr. Armendariz skipped his testimony in the House in June 2012 for a job interview at the Sierra Club.

On June 19, 2012, Darren Smith, environmental manager at Devon Energy Corporation, testified before the Senate EPW Committee exposing EPA's flawed analysis behind air regulations on the oil and natural gas industries. Smith also explained that EPA's "misperception of initial production from gas wells has 'led to a drastic overestimate of methane emissions from hydraulically fractured gas wells' and this has allowed EPA to justify the promulgation of new air standards for the natural gas industry.'" To watch the full testimony, [click here](#).

On [June 19, 2012](#), Senate EPW Republicans sent a letter to the Inspector General's office of the EPA requesting an investigation to determine if proper protocols and procedures were followed by EPA Headquarters and Region 6 surrounding their issuance and subsequent withdrawal of a December 2010 administrative order in Parker County, Texas.

On [May 4, 2012](#), Inhofe released a statement in response to EPA's Draft Permitting Guidance for Diesel Fuel, an announcement from the administration couched in a barrage of federal efforts designed to stunt hydraulic fracturing by putting more and more authority over the process into the hands of the federal government.

On [May 1, 2012](#), the *New York Times* reported that EPA Region 6 Administrator Al Armendariz resigned over a video circulated of a speech of which Armendariz declared that the agency should hit oil and gas producers with the Roman practice of crucifying enemies as a deterrent.

On [April 30, 2012](#), Inhofe released a statement on the resignation of EPA Region 6 Administrator Al Armendariz in the wake of the release of a video in which Armendariz is caught on tape admitting that EPA's "general philosophy" to "crucify" and "make examples" out of oil and gas companies so that others are "really easy to manage."

On [April 26, 2012](#), Inhofe released a statement in response to then-EPA Region 6 Administrator Al Armendariz's "general philosophy" to "crucify" and "make examples" out of oil and gas companies.

On [April 25, 2012](#), Inhofe gave a speech on the Senate floor regarding President Obama's war on domestic energy production in which EPA Region 6 administrator Al Armendariz said, "crucify them."

On [April 25, 2012](#), Inhofe sent a letter to EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson expressing concerns with EPA actions surrounding the issuance of an Emergency Administrative Order in Parker County, Texas.

On [April 18, 2012](#), Inhofe released a statement in response to EPA's first federal air rules for natural gas wells that are hydraulically fractured.

On [April 16, 2012](#), Inhofe sent a letter to EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson expressing serious concern that the intention of the New Source Performance Standard (NSPS) and the National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants (NESHAPs) for Oil and Gas Production and Natural Gas Transmission is to attack hydraulic fracturing efforts on the foundation of faulty and inaccurate data.

On [March 30, 2012](#), EPA withdrew its 15-month-old emergency order against Range Resources in Parker County, Texas. The Texas Railroad Commission, which regulates drilling activity in the state, found in March 2011 that Range Resources' Parker County gas wells did not contaminate groundwater.

On [Jan. 20, 2012](#), Inhofe led nine Senators in a letter sent to EPA administrator Lisa Jackson requesting EPA to consider its investigation on hydraulic fracturing and groundwater near Pavillion, Wyoming.

On [Jan. 20, 2012](#), Inhofe released a statement in response to EPA administrator Lisa Jackson's letter provided in response to Inhofe's Dec. 6, 2011 letter regarding EPA's study on hydraulic fracturing and groundwater in Pavillion, Wyoming.

On [Jan. 19, 2012](#), Inhofe and Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) sent a letter to EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson regarding data that EPA had relied upon in its draft report on hydraulic fracturing in Pavillion, Wyoming.

On [Dec. 21, 2011](#), a bipartisan group of Senators led by Inhofe sent a letter to EPA expressing concern about the approach the agency seems to be taking to regulate hydraulic fracturing under the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) when diesel fuel is used.

On [Dec. 6, 2011](#), Inhofe sent a letter to EPA administrator Lisa Jackson asking the Agency to explain contradictory statements regarding its study on hydraulic fracturing and groundwater in Pavillion, Wyoming. The letter further expresses concern that EPA is coming to predetermined conclusions that lack transparency.

On [Nov. 3, 2011](#), Inhofe released a statement on EPA's final hydraulic fracturing study plan.

On [May 24, 2011](#), Lisa Jackson, EPA administrator, testified before the House Committee on Oversight and Government reform saying, “I’m not aware of any proven case where the fracking process itself has affected water...”

On [March 2, 2011](#), Inhofe sent a letter to EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson requesting documents and information drafted by EPA concerning groundwater and domestic natural gas production.

On [Feb. 14, 2011](#), Inhofe sent a letter to EPA Inspector General Arthur Elkins requesting the preservation of all EPA documents and records related to EPA headquarters and EPA Region 6’s work in connection to the Emergency Administrative Order issued in Parker County, Texas.

On [Oct. 22, 2010](#), Inhofe sent a letter to EPA Region 8 Administrator James Martin, requesting documents and information pertaining to EPA’s investigation of hydraulic fracturing and groundwater in Pavillion, Wyoming.

On [Sept. 23, 2010](#), Inhofe wrote a blog post, *Why Limit A Safe, Effective Method?*, in National Journal.

On [Sept. 2, 2010](#), Inhofe sent a letter to EPA administrator, Lisa Jackson, regarding EPA Region 8’s evaluation of groundwater contamination in Pavillion, Wyoming. The letter expresses significant concern that EPA Region 8 staff have not been transparent about their testing results, including the science supporting them.

On [March 18, 2010](#), Inhofe released a statement on the announcement by EPA of a public meeting to discuss how the agency will conduct a study on hydraulic fracturing.

On [July 27, 2009](#), Inhofe delivered a Senate floor speech highlighting the nation’s vast reserve of energy resources recoverable through hydraulic fracturing techniques.