
The Dangers of Natural Gas and Preemption Legislation

The natural gas industry, backed by lobbying groups like the American Gas Association, is actively pushing a “preemption strategy” in state legislatures across the nation. This policy strips power from local governments, locks-in high electric bills and in-home air pollutants, and harms public health.

Special Interest-backed preemption legislation is bad policy. Here’s why:

Localities know what’s best for their communities, not the natural gas industry.

- Preemption bills strip local governments of their decision-making authority, placing the needs of special interests over that of constituents.
- Municipalities deserve the authority to establish goals and plan proactively. Preemption bills silence local representatives and the people that elected them.
- As diverse energy sources become more accessible and affordable, local leadership is in the best position to determine what communities need. Preemption policy irresponsibly reduces choice.

Forcing communities to rely on natural gas locks-in high electric and utility bills.

- Preemption legislation mandates the use of gas even if more affordable energy sources are available.
- The price of natural gas is greatly influenced by international markets and events, a big reason why Dominion Energy raised *minimum* electric bills by an average of \$15¹.
- All electric appliances like heat pumps can be three to five times as efficient as natural gas appliances – meaning they accomplish the same outcome with less energy. Less energy = lower electric bills.

Pollution felt on the local level should be addressed at the local level.

- Natural gas is a pollution-intensive energy source that can harm our health by hurting air quality in our homes.
- Gas appliances can leak volatile chemicals that are toxic and result in asthma, and respiratory and cardiovascular illness when breathed in²
- Stoves and furnaces connected to gas lines leak volatile chemicals that form toxic particulate matter that can cause asthma and other respiratory and cardiovascular illness. **A recent study found that 650,000 cases of childhood asthma can be attributed to gas stove use.**³
- Localities deserve the option to make decisions about public health without the interference of natural gas special interests.

¹ <https://www.virginiamercury.com/blog-va/regulators-approve-dominion-bill-increase-for-rising-fuel-costs-appalachian-power-also-seeking-hike/>

² <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/c-change/news/natural-gas-used-in-homes/>

³ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2023/01/06/gas-stove-pollution-causes-127-childhood-asthma-study-finds/>

Natural Gas(lightning) Industry Claims vs Context and Facts

Policy should be guided through comprehensive understanding of an issue, not half-truths, missing context, and falsehoods. The gas industry claims that natural gas is good for the environment, health etc. but these claims don't hold up.

You may hear this...	But the Truth is this:
Natural Gas is a clean, renewable energy source	No part of the natural gas process is clean or safe. Extracting it requires harmful construction that pollutes our air and water. Transporting it (pipelines) causes major leakage of methane, and it can result in dangerous explosions ⁴ . Plugging it into our appliances releases toxic air pollutants in our homes. A recent, peer reviewed, study found that 650,000 cases of childhood asthma can be attributed to gas stove use ⁵ .
Natural gas is more affordable than clean energy.	The price of natural gas is influenced by international market forces. This makes the price volatile and responsive to international incidents and supply chain issues. Clean energy is largely independent of these forces which makes the price more affordable AND stable. In Virginia our biggest utility, Dominion energy, raised the minimum bill on electricity by \$15 because the price of natural gas skyrocketed.
Natural gas is imperative for national security / Russia's war in Ukraine	Energy independence is impossible with natural gas since it forces reliance on international trade. Clean energy powers our communities in a stable, reliable and affordable way since the "fuel source" (sun, wind, etc.) is free.
Pre-emption makes things uniform and makes regulations easier	Stripping local leaders of autonomy and authority to make informed decisions is regressive and anti-democratic. Local governments should be able to prevent their constituents from being locked-into natural gas if they want to.
Natural gas preemption is preserving consumer choice over their energy.	Forcing communities to rely on natural gas is just a strategy to prolong dependency on fossil fuels. Natural gas hook ups give the industry an excuse to build more polluting projects like pipelines, gas power plants, and compressor stations. Preemption bills are simply an effort to block communities from accessing – and benefiting from – affordable clean energy.

Bottom line: Special interests should not be favored above local autonomy. Oppose Natural Gas Preemption Bills to protect local authority and public health.

⁴State Impact NPR Pennsylvania /stateimpact.npr.org/pennsylvania/2018/09/10/natural-gas-pipeline-blast-in-beaver-county-prompts-evacuation/

⁵washingtonpost.com/politics/2023/01/06/gas-stove-pollution-causes-127-childhood-asthma-study-finds/

