

Protect Texas from Oil and Gas Pollution



It's time to reform the Railroad Commission.

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The Problem

- Texas leads the country in methane pollution. Millions of tons of it are released into the air flaring and venting, cooking our climate and affecting our health.
- Texas has more than 8,000 “orphan” wells that need to be cleaned-up and plugged, and tens of thousands of other wells that could eventually become orphaned.
- Our oil and gas industry regulatory agency - the Texas Railroad Commission - doesn't have enough staff, technology, inspection drones, or up-to-date enforcement tools.
- Maximum fines for permit violations haven't been updated since 1983, meaning industry knows even if they violate the law they will only receive a slap on the wrist.
- Texas's standards on hydrogen sulfide are out of date, exposing workers and communities to dangerous levels of pollution.

The Solutions

- The Texas Legislature should approve the Railroad Commission's budget request for more pipeline inspectors, technology upgrades, vehicles, and drones for inspections.
- Texas should take full advantage of the federal funds to plug thousands of orphaned wells.
- Pass needed reforms to require enhanced bonding requirements for oil and gas operators, and give the Railroad Commission enhanced enforcement tools such as raising the maximum fines from \$10,000 per day to \$25,000 per day.
- Pass legislation to require TCEQ to fully implement methane regulations and require the Railroad Commission to limit (and eventually phase out) the practice of flaring.
- Require oil and gas operators that utilize our University Lands to meet best practices on flaring, leak detection and repair, and other environmental improvements.

Funding Needs

- Support up to 20 additional pipeline inspectors (\$3.5 million), oil and gas inspectors (\$10 million), inspection and enforcement tracking system (\$3 million); technology and mainframe transformation (\$21.5 million), and vehicles (\$1.8 million);
- Fully appropriate both state and federal funds to plug at least 4,000 orphan wells over the next two years, including at least \$122 million in federal funds in FY 24-25.

Stakeholder Support

- A proposal by the US EPA to better regulate methane emissions and flaring has generated more than 15,000 comments in support.
- There was bipartisan support for the federal infrastructure bill, which includes the largest federal well plugging program.

Good Bills

- **HB 228 (Goodwin):** Relating to the applicability of the gas production tax to flared or vented gas at an increased rate.
- **HB 1386 (Gervin-Hawkins):** Relating to a study conducted by the Railroad Commission of Texas regarding reported gas flaring.
- **HB 1469 (Rosenthal):** Relating to the establishment by the Railroad Commission of Texas of a policy to eliminate the routine flaring of natural gas from wells or other facilities regulated by the commission.
- **HB 1721 (Raymond):** Relating to the regulation of oil and gas waste.
- **SB 256 (Eckhardt):** Relating to the applicability of the gas production tax to flared or vented gas at an increased rate.
- **SB 257 (Eckhart):** Relating to the reduction of methane gas flaring on land dedicated to the permanent university fund.

Bad Bills

- **HB 33 (Landgraf):** Relating to the enforcement of certain federal laws regulating oil and gas operations within the State of Texas.
- **SB 470 (Springer):** Relating to the enforcement of certain federal laws regulating oil and gas operations within the State of Texas.