

ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH CONGRESS
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE
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November 14, 2011

The Honorable Fred Upton
Chairman
Committee on Energy and Commerce
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Upton:

On November 10, the Secretary of Energy Advisory Board Subcommittee on Shale Gas Production (SEAB) released its final report on the steps that industry and regulators should take to ensure that shale gas development proceeds responsibly and safely. We request that you schedule a hearing before the end of the year on this important report.

On August 18, 2011, SEAB released its interim report, which included several recommendations for how state and federal regulators and industry could reduce the impact of shale gas development on air quality, water quality, and the quality-of-life in communities near drilling operations.¹ SEAB noted that, absent an effective regulatory and industry response, expanded natural gas production could produce serious environmental consequences. In particular, SEAB recommended that industry and government officials improve public access to information about shale gas drilling activities; reduce emissions of methane and ozone precursors from new and existing wells; and protect water quality at every stage of the drilling and production process.

Last week, SEAB released its final report assessing whether “initial, constructive, steps” are underway to implement these recommendations.² SEAB identified nine recommendations that are ready for implementation and where federal agencies have primary responsibility. Unfortunately, SEAB found that the progress of implementing these recommendations “is less

¹ Secretary of Energy Advisory Board, *Shale Gas Production Subcommittee 90-Day Report* (Aug. 18, 2011) (online at www.shalegas.energy.gov/resources/081811_90_day_report_final.pdf).

² Secretary of Energy Advisory Board, *Shale Gas Production Subcommittee Second 90-Day Report* (Nov. 10, 2011) (online at www.shalegas.energy.gov/resources/111011_90_day_report.pdf) (draft).

The Honorable Fred Upton
November 14, 2011
Page 2

than the Subcommittee hoped.”³ The report concluded that “concerted and sustained action” is needed to prevent shale gas production from harming the environment and public health across the country.⁴

To date, the Committee has not held a single hearing on the topic of hydraulic fracturing and natural gas development, despite the importance of natural gas to our energy future and widespread public concern about air and water pollution from natural gas production. The SEAB report is a good place to start. We request that you schedule a hearing on this issue as soon as possible.

Sincerely,



Henry A. Waxman
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy
and Commerce



Edward J. Markey
Ranking Member
Committee on Natural
Resources



Diana DeGette
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Oversight
and Investigations

cc: Cliff Stearns
Chairman
Subcommittee on Oversight
and Investigations

³ *Id.*

⁴ *Id.*