

# Pipeline opposition is ill-placed

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As opposition to fossil fuel pipeline projects continues to make news, let's remind ourselves about the benefits of fossil fuels. It is undeniable that the growth in fossil fuel use has led to more widespread access to affordable energy. In turn, that has afforded us better health, greater wealth, and an improved quality and length of life.

Worldwide, fossil fuel consumption grew 80 per-cent between 1980 and 2012. At the same time, life expectancy and income rose while malnutrition and infant mortality dropped. Malnutrition is being combated with fertilizers, pesticides and modern farming techniques - mostly based on or powered by fossil fuels. Medical outcomes have improved due to electrified and climate-controlled laboratories and hospitals, as well as the ability to rapidly move patients, donated organs and medicines to where they are needed - again, all of that dependent on fossil fuels.

Billions of people now live fuller, freer and healthier lives, thanks in large part to fossil fuels.

Indeed, fossil fuels make modern life possible. They get us to work or to travel to see our families, and enable first responders to do their jobs. They heat and cool our homes, hospitals, schools and retirement homes. They are the building blocks for most of what we use and wear.

While there are a small number of people in the world's most prosperous nations "taking a stand" for keeping fossil fuels in the ground, their success would leave a billion people in desperate poverty. And ironically, blocking natural gas production would impede progress on the very objective they claim to seek - addressing global climate change.

Natural gas has been and remains critical to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Since 1993, the U.S. population increased by 60 million, real GDP rose 70 percent and overall electric power generation went up by 28 percent. But CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are back to 1993 levels, mainly because natural gas-fired generation increased its share of the total from 13 percent to 33 percent, while coal dropped from 53 percent to 33 percent.

In addition to reducing emissions from the electricity sector, the natural gas value chain slashed its own emissions during an era of greatly enhanced production - mostly because we have a substantial economic incentive to keep it in our pipes. While domestic natural gas production grew 45 percent from 1990-2014, methane emissions actually declined 6 per-cent.

Here in Houston, industry in general has made dramatic improvements in air quality even as the economy boomed. The U.S. EPA recently found that in the Houston- Galveston-Brazoria area, "air trends show overall progress in reducing ozone concentrations over the past 15 years" - more than 20 percent lower over the last decade.



That is consistent with global experience during the last several decades, which has combined economic productivity based on fossil fuel use with a high quality of life and increasingly better health.

As for safety, the pipeline sector keeps improving, driven primarily by existing financial incentives and the need to maintain investor confidence. We are also overseen and permitted by dozens of agencies, and have been for decades. Thanks to better integrity technologies and processes, pipeline systems are actually getting safer as they age. The number of serious incidents per year dropped almost 40 percent in the last decade.

Sadly, the protesters trying to stop the construction of pipelines would only block the safest, most cost-effective and most environmentally sensitive way of delivering these vital products. If they were to succeed in their stated goal of "keeping it in the ground," millions would be denied better health, wealth and quality of life. But given the fundamental laws of supply and demand, they won't succeed; they will only cause fossil fuels to move less safely and with greater risk of environmental harm.

The laws of supply and demand are not the only laws we must respect. This great country was founded upon strict adherence to the rule of law. We have legislative and regulatory mechanisms to decide policies governing the production, transportation and consumption of fossil fuels. And we have political processes that govern those mechanisms.

We live in a free society, and we won't all agree on everything. But we can and should agree that where we have disagreements, we'll base our arguments on concrete facts rather than slogans; and that we will abide by the decisions made by the institutions of our free society rather than risk the kind of chaos we see in other parts of the world.

Let's all commit to active participation in political, legislative and regulatory processes. And then agree that once those processes have rendered a decision, we will all abide by it and respect our fellow citizens and the sanctity of the rule of law.

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