

Press Release

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EHP Releases White Paper: “Pennsylvania’s Shale Gas Boom: What the Shapiro Administration Can Do to Better Protect Public Health”

PITTSBURGH, PA, April 1, 2025 – The Environmental Health Project (EHP) is releasing its latest white paper, “Pennsylvania’s Shale Gas Boom: What the Shapiro Administration Can Do to Better Protect Public Health,” at a virtual event today, April 1, 2025, at noon.

Pennsylvania residents impacted by the vast network of shale gas infrastructure—wells, compressor stations, processing plants, pipelines, truck traffic, etc.—had every reason to expect that Gov. Shapiro and his administration, once in office, would work hard to defend their health from sources of pollution. Two years later, residents are still waiting for meaningful action. This white paper addresses progress and shortcomings of the administration while offering recommendations for what the governor and his administration can do better to protect residents’ health.

Speaking at the launch will be **Pennsylvania State Rep. Arvind Venkat, MD**, impacted resident **Lois Bower-Bjornson**, and **EHP Executive Director Alison L. Steele**. (See full bios below.)

“Over the past 20 years, enough research studies and investigations have been done to clearly demonstrate many of the health risks posed by shale gas development,” said **Alison L. Steele**. “Any call for more studies should not preclude swift and meaningful action on the part of our government. Now is the time for Gov. Shapiro and his administration to recognize the preponderance of evidence that already exists and take reasonable steps to defend the health of our residents from oil and gas pollution. In doing so, he can address legitimate concerns that exist with respect to Pennsylvania’s public health but also its environmental and economic health.”

Approximately 1.5 million Pennsylvanians live within a half mile of oil and gas wells. Millions more live within a half mile of a pipeline, compressor station, processing facility, or other shale gas infrastructure, raising health risks for those individuals, their families, and their neighbors. Yet, every Pennsylvania resident is impacted by climate change, from more frequent and intense storms and floods, to heat waves and Lyme disease. Pollution from the oil and gas industry is a major contributor to that climate change.

EHP’s white paper is a call to action to the governor—and indeed to government at all levels—to heed the Pennsylvania Constitution and deliver to residents the health protections they have been promised. The recommendations laid out in this document can serve to support a much-needed transition to a renewable energy economy, which will involve creating sustainable jobs, reducing health impacts and health care costs associated with the shale gas industry, and saving lives.

Speaker Bios

State Representative Arvind Venkat, MD

Rep. Arvind Venkat, an emergency physician, was elected to serve his first term in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives in November 2022. He is the first Indian American to be elected to the state House and the first physician to serve in the General Assembly in nearly 60 years.

He serves as Pennsylvania State Representative for the 30th Legislative District, which includes part of Hampton Township, and all of McCandless, Franklin Park, Ohio Township, Emsworth, Ben Avon, Ben Avon Heights, and Kilbuck.

Rep. Venkat completed his undergraduate and graduate education at Harvard University, his medical education at Yale University, and his emergency medicine residency at the University of Cincinnati/University Hospital. He served as a member of the Board of the McCandless-Franklin Park Ambulance Authority and is a former president of the state emergency physicians organization.

Lois Bower-Bjornson

Lois Bower-Bjornson is the Southwestern Pennsylvania Field Organizer with Clean Air Council. The mother of four children – three boys and a girl – Lois grew up in and still lives and works in Washington County, PA, the most heavily fracked county in Pennsylvania. A dancer by trade, Lois never imagined she would be working to advocate for stronger environmental protections for her community, the commonwealth, and even the country.

Early on in her advocacy work, Lois attended many meetings with elected officials to encourage them to develop standards to protect the community's air and health. During the meetings, Lois started asking, "Do you know what it's like to live with fracking in your backyard? Come see it for yourself."

After the first few elected officials showed interest in witnessing the impacts of fracking, Lois created Clean Air Council's Frackland Tours project. The tours are designed to give elected officials and members of the media a first-hand account of what it is like to live near fracking and related operations used to process and transport the gas, such as pipelines and compressor stations.

Alison L. Steele, MBA

Alison L. Steele has served as executive director of the Environmental Health Project since 2020. She earned her bachelor's degree in physics from Drew University in Madison, NJ, and her MBA in sustainable business practices from Duquesne University in Pittsburgh. Energy has been a focus of her career across private- and public-sector work, specifically how the choices we make in energy procurement and use impact public health, the environment, and the economy.

Her graduate research focused on organizational behavior principles that can aid in the adoption of sustainability initiatives at international corporations and in consensus-building among grassroots movements at the local level. Last year she was selected to represent the United States in an international Climate Leadership Lab, where she worked with 15 other fellows to identify ways to overcome common challenges in climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts across multiple sectors and disciplines.

A Pennsylvania native, Alison is passionate about the environment and believes that everyone should have the opportunity to live a healthy life, free of pollution, regardless of where they reside.

About the Environmental Health Project

The [Environmental Health Project](#) (EHP) is a nonpartisan, nonprofit public health organization that defends public health in the face of shale gas development. EHP provides frontline communities with timely monitoring, interpretation, and guidance while engaging diverse stakeholders: health professionals, researchers, community organizers, policy makers, and others.

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