

Protection from fossil fuel pollution needed

Guest columnist Drew Johnson argued against federal methane emissions regulations. He stated that rules to stop flaring and venting are as nonsensical as rules to prevent ice cream makers from spilling ice cream: Oil companies won't waste methane because it's a valuable product to them.

In theory, Johnson's argument holds cream. Why would companies spill their bread and butter pecan?

Yet, in Texas oil and gas country, flaring and venting are regulated by two state agencies and the Environmental Protection Agency.

Nonetheless, venting and flaring there increased 400 percent since 2009. Why? Oil production boomed, but natural gas prices were so low that it wasn't worth capturing to sell. Methane became an unwanted byproduct of oil drilling.

Texans sued to force the EPA to regulate flaring and venting because methane air pollution sickens people and contains dangerous components like benzene, a carcinogen that causes leukemia.

This suggests that methane in the air from fossil fuel operations isn't ice cream. Johnson's column would have sounded different if he'd talked about leukemia instead of yummy, wholesome strawberry ice cream.

The U.S. District Court gave the EPA until February 2018 to revise its inadequate methane flaring and venting regulations.

Protecting people and the environment from fossil fuel pollution will be a rocky road that U.S. Sens. Lamar Alexander and Bob Corker could make smoother. They should sponsor a carbon tax proposal by George Shultz, James Baker and Henry Paulson, which requires fossil fuel producers pay a tax for being allowed to dump their waste in our air. Distributing the revenue to the public is the least that Congress and the fossil fuel industry owes the public.

Please ask Alexander and Corker to compensate you with regular carbon checks for the dangerous pollution you've had to tolerate. Don't forget to add pretty please, with a cherry on top.

Judy Weiss, Brookline, Mass.

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