

Intelligence Squared Fracking Debate Discusses Pros and Cons Of Shale Gas Boom

A recent [debate from Intelligence Squared U.S.](#) examined the growing American shale gas boom and brought experts together to discuss the pros and cons of [fracking](#). A controversial natural gas drilling technique, fracking has been cited as both a viable method of accessing significant quantities of gas in North America and as a major threat to human health and environmental integrity.

Despite varying opinions on fracking, the debate, a part of the Aspen Institute's [Aspen Ideas Festival](#), appeared to turn the audience against fracking. In response to the statement "[No fracking way: The natural gas boom has done more harm than good](#)," the audience was split with 38 percent both for and against. Most of the 24 percent that were initially undecided voted in favor of the statement, putting the post-debate poll results at 53 percent against fracking, 42 in favor and only five percent undecided.

In the opening round of the debate, Riverkeeper's Watershed Program director, Katherine Hudson, argued

Until we have a much better understanding of the processes and the true risks, until there are mandatory rules in place to control these risks and eliminate the extreme harm, and until the industry actually follows those rules, the only defensible course of action is a cautious one. The only reasonable and fair answer is, "No, no fracking way."

In her rebuttal, Susan Tierney, a former assistant secretary for policy in the U.S. Department of Energy, said, "What I really wish is that people would stop demonizing this fuel, because it makes it impossible to find sensible solutions in the middle."

Even though the Obama administration recently [advanced regulations for controlling air pollution from fracking wells](#), Secretary of the Interior Ken [Salazar told Reuters](#) that he thinks the U.S. needs tougher hydraulic fracturing regulations. Salazar said, "There are some who are saying that it's not something we ought to do, it should be left up to the states. That's not good enough for me because states are at very different level, [sic] some have zero, some have decent rules."

North Carolina Governor Beverly Perdue recently [vetoed legislation to lift a ban on fracking](#) in her state. The North Carolina House subsequently voted to override the governor's veto and allow fracking in North Carolina. A decisive vote [came from a Democratic representative who "mistakenly" voted](#) to override the governor's veto, explained AP.

Debate also continues in New York, where reports suggest that Governor Andrew Cuomo's administration [may allow fracking in the state's Southern Tier region](#). A "coalition of more than 100 groups" issued a statement at the end of June, calling on Cuomo to wait until the state's Department of Environmental Conservation finishes its environmental review.

Watch the Intelligence Squared U.S. debate above or [read a transcript here](#).