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Fracking Case Study Two

The majority of the country has heard some of the controversy that surrounds fracking in the United States, be it the economic or environmental concerns, the topic of fracking is polarizing. Fracking, according to Britannica, “ is the injection of a fluid at high pressure into an underground rock formation to open fissures and allow trapped gas or crude oil to flow through a pipe to a wellhead at the surface. This technique is used in natural gas and petroleum production.” As of September 2021, fracking is primarily monitored at a state level, meaning that besides some federal regulations each state has the power to self regulate fracking. While currently federal regulations are not the primary source of monitoring on fracking, there are certain federal regulations in place by organizations such as the Environmental Protection Agency which regulates pollution and environmental factors in general throughout the United States. In regards to fracking, all state regulated fracking must be done within the boundaries of all EPA environmental regulations which include some collaboration as well as consistent monitoring for excess pollution. Fracking has always and most likely will always cause disputes between states and levels of governments, because of this fracking should be regulated at a federal level. Fracking should be managed by the federal government because of the environmental impacts that come with the practice and to further prevent conflicts between state and local governments.

Fracking also has astronomical environmental drawbacks which not only affect the states in which fracking takes place, but the country and world as a whole. Due to this the government should be able to regulate this practice, to ensure that fracking is done in the most environmentally cautious way possible. Fracking requires vast amounts of water mixed with chemicals and sand to be injected into the ground to release oil and gas. This mixture of chemicals contains toxic chemicals which can potentially leak into ground water and contaminate not only local water sources, but also travel into larger bodies of water. In addition to the water pollution, fracking also leads to air pollution and releases chemicals such as volatile organic compounds, nitrogen oxides, and particulate matter. These chemicals in the air can lead to respiratory health issues, as well as directly contributing to climate change. The environmental drawbacks that come from fracking are not simply affecting the local or state areas where the actual fracking is taking place, but can also have just as negative an effect on surrounding regions, and with chemicals being released that exacerbate global warming, the world. Without heavy, uniformed regulations these effects of fracking could have drastic side effects, state governments do not have the proper resources or knowledge to do this without government regulation. This is why due to the large scope of potential far reaching consequences the federal government should be in control of managing all fracking in the United States.

In addition to the federal government being able to prevent environmental damages through federally managing fracking, the government would also be preventing several potential conflicts between local and state governments. Fracking operations often require large areas of land for drilling sites, infrastructure, and waste disposal, which leads to issues within the local areas where fracking is taking place. Local governments could have their own zoning and land use regulations that may restrict or prohibit fracking activities, in order to combat concerns on

noise, traffic, pollution, etcetera. This could potentially lead state governments to attempt to override local zoning and land use regulations to promote fracking, for the economy. An example of this would be the case of the City of Longmont. Longmont is a city in Colorado located between Denver and Boulder. In 2012, members of the city council began efforts to restrict the use of fracking within Longmont, starting with restricting drilling in residential neighborhoods, mandating regular water testing near drilling sites, and that there would have to be a 750-foot setback distance between where drilling occurred and inhabited buildings. Eventually the city voted in November 2012 to ban all fracking in Longmont. The state government took issue with 'local control' in this case, and in 2016 took the case of Longmont to the highest courts in Colorado, where the Colorado Supreme Court ruled in favor of the state and thereby halted the city's fracking ban. Issues such as these would not occur if all fracking was held under the same federal regulations, and state and local governments were solely responsible for upholding these regulations. Other conflicts that occur between state and local governments regarding fracking, are about revenue sharing and taxation. Fracking generates significant revenue through taxes and fees, which leads to the question of where the money should be used. Local governments may argue that they should be given a greater share of the wealth to compensate for the impacts of fracking on their communities, while state governments may argue that they should be given a greater share to promote change at a state level. There will never not be conflicts of power between state and local governments, however the federal government regulating fracking could aid with issues such as these.

Fracking will always, and should always be controversial, but who should regulate fracking shouldn't be, fracking should be mandated by the federal government. Fracking leads to several irreversible environmental consequences which reach far greater than solely the area that

the fracking occurs in. In addition to this fracking leads to several conflicts between state and local governments. With federal regulations of fracking practices both of these issues can be dealt with and contained.

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