

ALEX MILLS: Compared with auto industry, oil drilling not worst polluter

By Alex Mills

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The federal government has tried just about every trick in the book to pull the plug on oil and gas drilling and production in Texas and throughout the United States.

Even before President Obama was sworn in on Jan. 20, 2009, he wanted Congress to pass an energy bill so he could sign it the day he took office. Of course, then-Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid couldn't pull that off, but they tried to pass a cap-and-trade bill before 2009 ended. The U.S. House narrowly passed a bill during the summer of 2009, but the Senate could not muster enough votes.

But while they couldn't accomplish it through the legislative process, Obama's regulators went to work in putting as much pressure on the oil and gas industry as possible.

Secretary of Treasury Timothy Geithner testified before Congress that the tax provisions that related to oil and gas "distorted economic markets" and "caused overproduction" of petroleum.

Obama's Environmental Protection Agency went just as far on the environmental side and has tried to regulate the oil and gas industry by declaring carbon dioxide, which is absolutely a necessity for human existence, a "pollutant" and issued its famous "endangerment finding." Lawsuits have been filed by 26 states, including Texas, against the EPA's rule to keep it from being enforced.

Numerous other actions have been taken by the EPA against the energy industry in Texas.

Mel LeBlanc, a member of the City Council in Arlington, countered a lot of the rhetoric in a column he wrote recently for the Fort Worth Star-Telegram.

LeBlanc compared the impact of drilling to the General Motors automobile manufacturing plant in Arlington. He cited an economic study recently released by the Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce that said 100,268 jobs have been created through oil and gas activity in the area compared with 2,633 direct and 14,500 indirect jobs from auto manufacturing. He also noted that \$11.1 billion had been delivered to North

Texas annually by drilling versus \$790 million to the annual gross state product by General Motors.

"Arlington's General Motors plant emits 200 tons of volatile organic compounds into our atmosphere annually based on EPA Emissions Inventory data," LeBlanc wrote. "The figure does not include emissions associated with employee commuting, nor truck and train delivery of 1,660 cars per day, nor the pending plant expansion.

"As a comparison," LeBlanc continued, "aggregate emissions for all natural gas wells drilled in Arlington, assuming a complete build-out of an estimated 313 gas wells, is 17 tons per year."

LeBlanc also noted that one printing company emitted 30 tons per year, which is about twice as much as all of natural gas drilling.

Yet the Obama administration continues to push for more regulation.

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