



Bowles Rice

# VIEWS & VISIONS

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# Keeping Our Foot on the (Natural) Gas



**Jeff M. Kotula**  
Washington County  
Chamber of Commerce

Jeff M. Kotula is President of the Washington County Chamber of Commerce, the largest chamber of commerce in the Greater Pittsburgh Region, and is also President of the Washington County Tourism Promotion Agency, which merged with the chamber in 2013. Kotula currently serves as Chairman of the Penn Highlands Healthcare-Mon Valley Board of Trustees as well as a member of the Penn Highlands Healthcare Corporate Board of Directors. He is also on the boards of the Greater Canonsburg Economic Development Committee, Pittsburgh Works Together and the Foundation for California University of Pennsylvania.

Over the last decade, Pennsylvania has become a leader in supplying the United States with the reliable, affordable, and clean energy that is used to power communities across the country. While clearly beneficial for our national economy, the harnessing of Pennsylvania's abundant natural resources has provided an economic resurgence to our local economies, particularly in Southwestern Pennsylvania. Our state and country have experienced an energy renaissance, which has brought a revitalization to our local communities, and that should not be overlooked.

The Greater Pittsburgh Region and Washington County have benefitted directly from the extraction and transportation of natural gas as well. Private sector business investment has created thousands of



## WASHINGTON COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

sustainable jobs in our area and millions of dollars in tax revenue for our local school districts, local governments, and our state. The advantages created by the energy industry have benefitted communities across our region.

With our abundance of energy resources, we should do everything in our power to continue to utilize them. The Commonwealth has established itself as a national leader in energy production, which is now one of six states that account for over half of the United States' energy production. Pennsylvania is the leading supplier of coal, natural gas, electricity, and refined petroleum east of the Mississippi River. More than 269,000 jobs exist within the Commonwealth's energy sector, accounting for 4.5 percent of the state workforce.

Despite the advancement we have made to become energy secure, some actions taken at the federal level threaten to upend the progress made over the past decade. Decisions like canceling the Keystone XL pipeline and raising fees on energy producers have been misguided energy policies that negatively impact jobs, the economy, and our energy security. Recently, there have been some signs that the Biden Administration is recognizing the importance of the natural gas industry to our national and international security,

especially with the recent announcement that it is starting to again sell leases to drill for oil and gas on federal lands. However, the Administration is still restricting the number of acres offered for leasing and increasing the costs that energy producers must incur to produce it. With all the energy that exists right under our feet, there is no excuse to hinder its use or restrict its benefits.

these goals is to allow American energy producers do what they do best – supply our country with clean-burning American natural gas, which is produced under the strictest environmental standards in the world and provides an efficient energy source that will be a bridge to our renewable energy future.

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If we want to continue to ensure America’s energy security, provide a vital energy backstop to our overseas allies, and lower energy prices for everyday Americans, our officials on all levels must come together and embrace an “all-of-the-above” energy approach. The fastest way to accomplish

Washington County has proven to be a model for what can be accomplished when government, industry, and labor work together toward a common goal. We need our national leaders to follow suit and, in doing so, ensure our economic and national security both now and for the future. ▽

