



VIEWS & VISIONS

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Making the Most of Our Energy and Economic Potential

Senator Joe Manchin
United States Senate

U.S. Senator Joe Manchin (D-W. Va.) was sworn into the United States Senate on November 15, 2010, to fill the seat left vacant by the late Senator Robert C. Byrd. For Senator Manchin, serving as West Virginia's Senator is truly an honor and a privilege.

Senator Manchin is defined by his family and the values that he learned growing up among the hardworking men and women of West Virginia which, over time, formed his vigilant desire to be a public servant. From his days as a state legislator to his six years as Governor to his current role, Senator Manchin has always been committed to his philosophy of "retail government"—in other words, connecting with all of his constituents and making service to them his top priority.

Senator Manchin currently serves on the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, the Senate Armed Services Committee, the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation and the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs - four critical Senate committees that tackle the important work of addressing our nation's energy needs, standing up for members of the military, honoring our veterans and finding commonsense solutions to boost economic prosperity.

Over the past few years, the Tri-State area has boomed like never before with the development of Marcellus and Utica Shale. We have created jobs, advanced our nation's goal of achieving energy independence and experienced the rebirth of a region. Northern West Virginia, along with parts of Pennsylvania and Ohio, continue to be in a position of strength in the energy industry as we literally sit on top of the natural gas that is helping to power this great nation. But with this significant opportunity has come certain challenges. In order to make the most of this potential, our states must work together, along with the support of the federal government, to address these unique challenges.


Individual states unquestionably know what is best for their people and their businesses. But while oversight and regulation is driven by the states, it is imperative that the federal

government be a valuable partner that encourages coordination and helps the states by providing regional investments that will benefit the nation as a whole. Above all else, the federal government must be an ally, not an adversary, to the states. As Governor of West Virginia, I was very involved in natural gas development, and as a member of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, I remain committed to fighting federal regulations that are damaging the industry. I'm also working to provide federal support to the state-led initiatives that are putting West Virginians back to work and setting us on a path toward energy independence.

One of the challenges the industry is facing involves the shale gas tax. Within energy-producing states like ours, there are many different types of energy tax policies being considered at the local and state level. These diverse policies are particularly troublesome to the industry, in light of a slump in prices and a substantial reduction in jobs. If businesses are forced to navigate a complex system of taxes and regulations, this pot of money for investment will eventually dry up.

Shale manufacturing and energy jobs increasingly require an understanding of science and technology, and it is important that our states are also coordinating to tackle the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) education challenge. Right now, we are already facing a shortage of STEM teachers. To add to that difficulty, many of our STEM teachers are often leaving the profession if they move across state lines because there is limited coordination of licensing systems between states, forcing teachers to jump through significant hoops if they want to teach in a new state. The bottom line is that we're losing good teachers to a flawed system.





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STEM education is greatly strengthened when schools, local governments and businesses coordinate. As an example, BridgeValley Community and Technical College and Toyota Motor Manufacturing established the Advanced Manufacturing Technician associate degree program in West Virginia. This program trains students in the skills that Toyota needs and Toyota offers jobs to the participants and graduates. Participants may earn more than \$40,000 over the five-semester program and graduates can earn well above that working full time at Toyota. This has been an excellent partnership that has helped strengthen West Virginia and create jobs. By establishing similar partnerships between our education institutions and the oil and gas industry, I believe we can better take advantage of our opportunities and overcome challenges.

There is no doubt that production of oil and shale gas will continue to grow over

the next 10 years. According to a recent projection by the Energy Information Administration (EIA), it will grow by about 30 percent and about 60 percent, respectively. With this expectation, we must be doing all we can to maximize the Shale's potential while also protecting the safety and health of our residents. I'm confident that if we work together and use our common sense, we can continue to progress the development of this important resource, create economic prosperity in our region and chart a new and promising energy future for America. ▽