

Appalachian Shale's Trump Card



Michael W. Wise | Tuesday, November 15, 2016

In the aftermath of the 2016 election, two of my colleagues here at MH did a great job digging into the results and making the case that the shale industry in the Appalachian Basin [delivered the presidency to Donald Trump](#). They plainly stated: "voters in the Appalachian Basin, many of whom had suffered through decades of economic hardship, were left to decide between the candidate who wished to unleash the bounty lying beneath their feet, or the candidate who wished to regulate it into oblivion."

Six months before the election, *The Guardian* [foreshadowed the November results](#):

"Even among Republicans, Donald Trump divides opinion in many parts of the country. Not so in Appalachia, where his success in the party's recently completed primary elections here was universal enough that it could serve as a new definition of the region's rugged borders. Of the 420 counties seen as sharing a culture that transcends state lines, Trump won all but 16, including a sweep of western Pennsylvania, eastern Ohio and the western uplands of Virginia with potentially profound ramifications for the general election."

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Hindsight always provides clarity, but the experts consistently ignored the mindset of Appalachian voters who were more than willing to vote economic interest ahead of historic party affiliation. Around the same time as *The Guardian* article, I wrote about the coming "[Golden Age of U.S. Energy](#)," where I listed four policy initiatives that could maximize the energy opportunity for the U.S.:

- 1) Allow drilling and mining permits on federal lands. To date, 90 percent of the shale gas and shale oil revolution has happened on private land, while half of all the land west of the Mississippi is government owned. There is an estimated \$50 trillion of energy resources stored underneath non-environmentally sensitive federal lands. This is the biggest treasure chest in the world.
- 2) Build a national network of pipelines across the country by allowing the permitting for projects like Keystone XL and many others. Right now, the federal government is holding up as many as a dozen necessary pipelines to get oil and gas across the country and then shipped across the world. Legislation is pending in the U.S. House to remove some of the barriers to infrastructure development. Here in Ohio, for the Utica Shale to be fully developed, we need the Rover and Nexus pipelines to be completed to allow Ohio drillers to reach the better pricing to our west.
- 3) Build refineries and liquefied natural gas terminals in the United States. The Energy Information Agency says the latest refiner began operating in 1977. That's almost 40 years ago, even though the U.S. population has nearly doubled since the mid-1970s and our energy production has doubled as well. The Appalachian region

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received great news recently with Shell's decision to build a cracker plant in the Pittsburgh region. Now, Ohio is reporting renewed optimism that a second cracker plant will be built in Belmont County, Ohio.

4) Stop the war on coal. Environmentalists have tried to shut down coal production; the next president should revive it so that our energy resources may be harnessed and used in an environmentally responsible way. Complying with basic environmental rules doesn't make coal production impossible, and we shouldn't pretend it does.

With a pro natural gas president about to enter the White House and a supportive Congress, there are high hopes that this agenda can be accomplished in the next year. We will all be watching – Trump's choice as Energy Secretary will be instructive . . .



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Team member bio