

White House Establishes Natural Gas Working Group to Streamline Fracking Policies

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On April 13, 2012, President Obama signed an [executive order](#) forming an interagency working group to promote the safe development of domestic natural gas. This working group will include officials from at least 13 administrative agencies and executive departments including the EPA, Department of Energy, Department of Transportation, and the Office of Science and Technology Policy. The group was established to promote interagency coordination, facilitate information-sharing, engage the groups in long-term planning, and avoid duplicative or contradictory rules from the various agencies.

Some lawmakers have criticized this executive order, asserting that states are in a better position than the federal government to govern hydraulic fracturing operations. Industry groups such as the American Petroleum Institute, American Gas Association, and the Business Roundtable, however, support the formation of the working group. Such groups hope that it will improve consistency and coordination among federal regulatory efforts in this area.

In his January 25, 2012, State of the Union Address, President Obama stated that natural gas exploration would lead to domestic job creation and decreased dependence on foreign oil, and that America will develop this resource without putting health and safety at risk. In addition to the working group established by executive order, the Obama administration has proposed to spend \$45 million in 2013 on a study of how to increase the safety of shale gas drilling.

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