

susan greene

You know the drill on oil, gas

By Susan Greene
Denver Post Columnist

Article Launched: 09/07/2008 12:30:00 AM MDT

"Drill, baby, drill. Drill now," went the scripts of speeches in St. Paul, Minn.

"Drill, baby, drill," Republicans chanted all week on the convention floor.

Given joblessness, record gas prices and overdependence on foreign oil, the GOP's new mantra almost makes sense.

Unless you think about it.

Unless you drive out of the city to witness an energy boom already hitting bust-weary Colorado.

And unless you consider what it would mean if, in an election-year frenzy, industry manages to further weaken oversight with the false promise that more rigs more urgently would bring lower prices at the pump.

"It's group-think at its lowest level," says Lisa Bracken, a homeowner near Silt. "It reflects a mentality driven by avarice, ignorance and disregard for people who suffer at the hands of an industry out of control."

In 2004, Bracken endured a seep from a well that prompted EnCana to halt drilling and pay the biggest fine in state history. She now faces what she says is another seep in the creek whose water her family drinks.

In a state where rigs can drill 150 feet from homes 2 4/7, Bracken equates living in a gas patch to being in a bad marriage: "You can't get away from it."

Meanwhile, the industry's newest front group is calling for more drilling in addition to the 8,000 gas permits the state is on pace to issue this year and the 100,000 others already predicted in the next 30.

Jim Pfaff, the former head of the anti-abortion and anti-gay Colorado Family Institute, is running the state chapter of Americans for Prosperity and promoting drilling in Coloradans' back (and even front) yards. He especially aims to open up oil-shale development under a rushed Bush administration plan that could rape Colorado's land and rip off its royalties.

Lower prices, Pfaff promises, lie in "eliminating government red tape and environmental alarmism."

That's off, baby, way off.

Fact is, while the state has allowed companies to drill at a 600 percent increase since 1999, the record pace has done nothing to lower prices. That's because gas, like oil, is a global commodity whose rates rise and fall with worldwide, not statewide, factors.

"It's drill more, pay more, not the other way around," says Carrie Doyle of Colorado Conservation Voters.

On Tuesday, the state starts finalizing new rules to keep up with the gas boom. At issue is how far

Advertisement

FACTORY OVERSTOCK BLOWOUT!

Leather High-Back \$219

Leather Mid-Back \$199

Bookcases Various Sizes \$149-\$259

2-Drawer Lateral File \$300

OFFICE LIQUIDATORS
Profit From Our Experience

11111 W. 6th Ave/ LAKEWOOD
Between Kipling & Simms

303-759-3375
www.OfficeLiquidators.com

regulators should go in protecting homes, wildlife and water supplies from drilling.

Industry has spent about \$1 million fighting the rules. It also is dropping \$10 million to defeat Amendment 58, which seeks to end tax subsidies for producers.

On both issues, companies threaten to pull out of the state if they don't get their way.

As if that would happen, given that Colorado is the holy grail of oil shale and, even with stricter rules and lower subsidies, would remain one of the easiest places to make money drilling, at least for natural gas.

Republicans' fierce urgency to drill now underscores the need for more, not less, accountability in a state that has seen as many energy busts as booms.

The party's newest chant is merely an election-year wedge pitting jobs against the environment and doing nothing to help kick an addiction to the fossil fuels overheating our planet.

I can already see the missives Monday from global warming deniers, GOP operatives and industry spinmeisters paid to debunk this column.

"Drill, baby, drill. Drill now," they are chanting in a state whose people they have mistaken for total suckers.

Susan Greene writes Sundays, Tuesdays and Thursdays. Reach her at 303-954-1989 or greene@denverpost.com.

Advertisement

FACTORY OVERSTOCK BLOWOUT!

Leather High-Back \$219

Leather Mid-Back \$199

Bookcases Various Sizes \$149-\$259

2-Drawer Lateral File \$399

OFFICE LIQUIDATORS
Profit From Our Experience

11111 W. 6th Ave/ LAKEWOOD
Between Kipling & Simms

303-759-3375
www.OfficeLiquidators.com