



Environmentalists and other well-adjusted citizens of Earth, I've got some good news and some bad news. The good news is that, thanks to illuminating documentaries like Josh Fox's *Gasland* and determined pressure from activists in and out of the mainstream, the toxic ravages of hydraulic fracturing, known as fracking, are no longer the shale gas sector's dirty secret.

The bad news is that, thanks to the United States' morally bankrupt political system and its Supreme Court's reality-defying ruling on *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*, the fracking lobby's power of the purse is greater than it has ever been.

That power was depressingly dissected in Common Cause's recent report, *Deep Drilling, Deep Pockets*, which explained that earnings junkies like Exxon, Koch and more have paid House and Senate politicians on select energy and commerce committees nearly \$750 million over the last decade to smother regulatory oversight of the expanding fracking practice, whose complete chemical components still remain a relative mystery. It was evidently money well spent.

During that lobbying stretch, the Environmental Protection Agency scientifically linked fracking with water poisoning in Wyoming, and probably isn't far from siding with the increasing ranks of those who blame fracking for earthquakes from Oklahoma to Ohio to England. And yet beyond manageable fines and stock devaluations, no one from the industry has yet to seriously face the music for groundwater contamination and worse.

For that, you can thank the industry's "Halliburton loophole," so named for former Vice-President Dick Cheney's insistence that his former company's fracking be stripped of EPA regulation. Years and billions later, money still talks and safety still walks in our peak oil century tapping, like veins, what fossil fuel deposits we have left, from natural gas to tar sands. And they do so in a decidedly nonpartisan fashion.

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