



Editorial

Not Advocating for the Public Good: Schlegel Testifies Against Fees for Gas and Oil

By William C. Thomas

Reading the text of HB 13-1273, which would establish up front oversight of oil and gas developers and producers and pay for it via a number of fees, it's hard to understand why Commissioner Schlegel would take the time to go to the Capitol and speak against it.

Was he worried about the distribution of funds? Was he worried about the cost of its administration to taxpayers? It looks like a hefty \$40,000.00 to set it up; but after that, it's a device by which the State collects fees from oil and gas developers and producers before they drill. Monies collected are then distributed to the counties where the drilling is going on.

All the analysis done by the Joint Budget Committee and the analysis by Capitol staffers seemed to endorse it without any warnings of its lack of feasibility or its trumping local regulations; so why did Schlegel testify against it?

Although its progress to the Floor has been stopped by the Senate Committee on Local Government as "Postponed Indefinitely," the Bill looks like it would aid inspection, provide money to counties hit by oil and gas exploration, and not interfere with local regulations.

It's a step forward; and Elbert County Commissioner Kurt Schlegel seems determined to keep it back; as he is determined to keep back any regulations or any imposition on oil or gas or special district.

Why? Better yet: what is his objection? Lack of regulation has made the County poorer in the laying of the green pipeline across it because previous County Commissioners waived the tax that would come with it in the interest of "attracting business." Lincoln County, which has both energy- creating windmills and infrastructure that were all taxed, has full coffers.

Elbert County still has a 4-day week. Elbert County is paying back debts that were ignored in a previous administration. Elbert County is still paying back a loan from Wells-Fargo: all created in the name of allowing business to have its way in an unregulated environment.

So why did Schlegel go down to the Capitol; spend the money on parking; walk two blocks to testify against Bill 13-1273? He did it because he has a sense of entitlement for business; none for the citizens he has pledged to serve.