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Editor  
Akron Beacon Journal

To the Editor,

The debate on hydraulic fracking in Plain Township, Portage County and elsewhere isn't simply about natural gas drilling dangers, property values or jobs. The core issue is about democracy and local self-governance.

It's about whether citizens and their elected local officials have the authority to protect their community or not. It's at root about whether citizens have the legal right to decide what drilling corporations -- with more extracted gas likely to be sent to other countries since it's more profitable -- can and cannot do to protect their community's health, safety and welfare.

Claims that drilling corporations have some god-given, cosmic or legal constitutional rights to do what they want, when they want, and where they want is an assault on *We the People's* right to protect our own community, economy and ecology. Human beings alone should have constitutional rights, not corporations.

Corporations don't like local people flexing their democratic muscles. That's why on issue after issue, they work to strip local control and move decisions to the state or federal levels -- where it's easier to influence politicians and regulators.

Recently, Pittsburgh City Council voted unanimously to completely ban fracking. The lead sponsor, Councilman Doug Shields, said, "It's about our authority as a community to decide, not corporations deciding for us."

Home Rule communities here, like Plain Township and others, should follow Pittsburgh's example and ban fracking.. Conserving a community's right to self-governance to protect their health, safety and welfare against corporate assaults should unite all Republicans, Democrats, Tea Partiers, Greens and Libertarians.

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