

Grant Township, Indiana County, Pennsylvania
Community Bill of Rights Ordinance

**ESTABLISHING A COMMUNITY BILL OF RIGHTS FOR THE PEOPLE OF GRANT TOWNSHIP,
INDIANA COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA, WHICH PROHIBITS ACTIVITIES AND PROJECTS THAT
WOULD VIOLATE THE BILL OF RIGHTS, AND WHICH PROVIDES FOR ENFORCEMENT OF THE
BILL OF RIGHTS**

Whereas, this community finds that the depositing of waste from oil and gas extraction is economically and environmentally unsustainable, in that it damages property values and the natural environment, and places the health of residents at risk, while failing to provide real benefits to the people of this community; and

Whereas, this community finds that the depositing of waste from oil and gas extraction violates the rights of Grant Township residents, including our right to make decisions about what happens to the places where we live; and

Whereas, private corporations engaged in the depositing of waste from oil and gas extraction are wrongly recognized by the federal and state government as having more “rights” than the people who live in our community, and thus, recognition of corporate “rights” is a denial of the rights of the people of Grant Township; and

Whereas, such denials violate the inherent right of people to local self-government; the guarantees of the Pennsylvania Constitution; and the guarantees of the Declaration of Independence and the United States Constitution; and

Whereas, the 1776 Pennsylvania Constitution recognized the inherent right of Pennsylvanians to local self-government by declaring that “all government ought to be instituted and supported for the security and protection of the community as such;” and

Whereas, that right to local self-government, now recognized and secured by Article 1, Section 2 of the current Pennsylvania Constitution, declares that “all power is inherent in the people, and all free governments are founded on their authority and instituted for their peace, safety, and happiness;” and

Whereas, this ordinance establishes a Community Bill of Rights to further recognize the right to local self-government in Grant Township, and secures that right by prohibiting those activities that would violate this local bill of rights;

Therefore, We the People of Grant Township hereby adopt this Community Bill of Rights Ordinance.

Section 1 – Definitions

(a) “**Corporations,**” for purposes of this Ordinance, shall include any corporation, limited partnership, limited liability partnership, business trust, public benefit corporation, business entity, or limited liability company organized under the laws of any state of the United States or under the laws of any country.

(b) “**Depositing of waste from oil and gas extraction**” shall include, but not be limited to, the depositing, disposal, storage, beneficial use, treatment, recycling, injection, or introduction of materials including, but not limited to, brine, “produced water,” “frack water,” tailings, flowback or any other waste or by-product of oil and gas extraction, by any means. The phrase shall also include the issuance of, or application for, any permit that would purport to allow these activities.

(c) “**Extraction**” shall mean the digging or drilling of a well for the purposes of exploring for, developing or producing shale gas, oil, or other hydrocarbons.

Section 2 – Statements of Law – A Community Bill of Rights

(a) *Right to Local Self-Government.* All residents of Grant Township possess the right to a form of governance where they live which recognizes that all power is inherent in the people and that all free governments are founded on the people’s consent. Use of the municipal corporation “Grant Township” by the people for the making and enforcement of this law shall not be deemed, by any authority, to eliminate, limit, or reduce that sovereign right.

(b) *Right to Clean Air, Water and Soil.* All residents of Grant Township, along with natural communities and ecosystems within the Township, possess the right to clean air, water, and soil, which shall include the right to be free from activities which may pose potential risks to clean air, water, and soil within the Township, including the depositing of waste from oil and gas extraction.

(c) *Right to Scenic Preservation.* All residents of Grant Township possess a right to the scenic, historic and aesthetic values of the Township, including unspoiled vistas and a rural quality of life. That right shall include the right of the residents of the Township to be free from activities which threaten scenic, historic, and aesthetic values, including the depositing of waste from oil and gas extraction.

(d) *Rights of Natural Communities and Ecosystems.* Natural communities and ecosystems within Grant Township, including but not limited to, rivers, streams, and aquifers, possess the right to exist, flourish, and naturally evolve.

(e) *Right to a Sustainable Energy Future.* All residents of Grant Township possess the right to a sustainable energy future, which includes, but is not limited to, the development, production, and use of energy from renewable and sustainable fuel sources, the right to establish local sustainable energy policies to further secure this right, and the right to be free from energy extraction, production, and use that may adversely impact the rights of human or natural communities. That right shall include the right to be free from activities related to fossil fuel extraction and production, including the depositing of waste from oil and gas extraction.

(f) *Right to Enforce.* All residents of Grant Township possess the right to enforce the rights and prohibitions secured by this Ordinance, which shall include the right of Township residents to intervene in any legal action involving the rights and prohibitions of this Ordinance.

(g) *Rights as Self-Executing.* All rights delineated and secured by this Ordinance are inherent, fundamental, and unalienable, and shall be self-executing and enforceable against both private

and public actors. The rights secured by this Ordinance shall only be enforceable against actions specifically prohibited by this Ordinance.

Section 3 – Statements of Law – Prohibitions Necessary to Secure the Bill of Rights

(a) It shall be unlawful within Grant Township for any corporation or government to engage in the depositing of waste from oil and gas extraction.

(b) No permit, license, privilege, charter, or other authority issued by any state or federal entity which would violate the prohibitions of this Ordinance or any rights secured by this Ordinance, the Pennsylvania Constitution, the United States Constitution, or other laws, shall be deemed valid within Grant Township.

Section 4 – Enforcement

(a) Any corporation or government that violates any provision of this Ordinance shall be guilty of an offense and, upon conviction thereof, shall be sentenced to pay the maximum fine allowable under State law for that violation. Each day or portion thereof, and violation of each section of this Ordinance, shall count as a separate violation.

(b) Grant Township, or any resident of the Township, may enforce the rights and prohibitions of this Ordinance through an action brought in any court possessing jurisdiction over activities occurring within the Township. In such an action, the Township or the resident shall be entitled to recover all costs of litigation, including, without limitation, expert and attorney's fees.

(c) Any action brought by either a resident of Grant Township or by the Township to enforce or defend the rights of ecosystems or natural communities secured by this Ordinance shall bring that action in the name of the ecosystem or natural community in a court possessing jurisdiction over activities occurring within the Township. Damages shall be measured by the cost of restoring the ecosystem or natural community to its state before the injury, and shall be paid to the Township to be used exclusively for the full and complete restoration of the ecosystem or natural community.

Section 5 – Enforcement – Corporate Powers

(a) Corporations that violate this Ordinance, or that seek to violate this Ordinance, shall not be deemed to be "persons," nor possess any other legal rights, privileges, powers, or protections which would interfere with the rights or prohibitions enumerated by this Ordinance. "Rights, privileges, powers, or protections" shall include the power to assert state or federal preemptive laws in an attempt to overturn this Ordinance, and the power to assert that the people of this municipality lack the authority to adopt this Ordinance.

(b) All laws adopted by the legislature of the State of Pennsylvania, and rules adopted by any State agency, shall be the law of Grant Township only to the extent that they do not violate the rights or prohibitions of this Ordinance.

Section 6 – Effective Date and Existing Permit Holders

This Ordinance shall be effective immediately on the date of its enactment, at which point the Ordinance shall apply to any and all actions that would violate this Ordinance, regardless of the date of any applicable local, state, or federal permit.

Section 7 – People’s Right to Self-Government

Use of the courts or the Pennsylvania legislature in attempts to overturn the provisions of this Ordinance shall require community meetings focused on changes to local governance that would secure the right of the people to local self-government.

Section 8 – State and Federal Constitutional Changes

Through the adoption of this Ordinance, the people of Grant Township call for amendment of the Pennsylvania Constitution and the federal Constitution to recognize a right to local self-government free from governmental preemption and or nullification by corporate “rights.”

Section 9 – Severability

The provisions of this Ordinance are severable. If any court decides that any section, clause, sentence, part, or provision of this Ordinance is illegal, invalid, or unconstitutional, such decision shall not affect, impair, or invalidate any of the remaining sections, clauses, sentences, parts, or provisions of the Ordinance.

Section 10 – Repealer

All inconsistent provisions of prior Ordinances adopted by Grant Township are hereby repealed, but only to the extent necessary to remedy the inconsistency.

ENACTED AND ORDAINED this ____ day of _____, 2014, by the Board of Supervisors of Grant Township, Indiana County, Pennsylvania.

By:

