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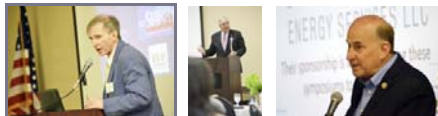
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Elected officials laud oil industry



William A. Ambrose, a research scientist at the state's Bureau of Economic Geology, discusses advanced oil and gas recovery Tuesday during the 2018 East Texas Energy Symposium.

NEWS HERALD PHOTO BY JAMES DRAPER



Posted Tuesday, May 1, 2018 10:00 pm

By James Draper

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"Texas is on a course to overtake Saudi Arabia in 2019 to become the world's largest exporter of oil and petroleum products."

At 8.3 million barrels a day, Drew Darby says, it's surpassing Russia.

Chairman of the Texas House's Energy Resource Committee, the District 72 representative offered Tuesday's keynote address at the East Texas Energy Symposium in Kilgore College's Devall Student Center Ballroom.



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It's a lawmaker's job to prevent the government from spending on things people don't ask for, Darby added. When it comes to the success of the oil and gas industry, it's the policy makers' job to not mess things up.

"And that's a big task. We sometimes can't get out of the way of ourselves," he told the industry representatives in the audience May 1, "but our job is to get out of the way, allow you folks to do what you do best, which is to find oil and gas and produce it.

"We must stop the bad policies that threaten our industry, like over-burdensome taxes and regulations. We must focus on good policies and not bad ones, policies that complement economic investment and growth."

That means focusing on a trained workforce, Darby said, properly funding the Texas Railroad Commission, properly funding roads worn down by the oil and gas industry's ongoing work.

With a 2018 agenda focused on oil and gas marketing strategies, the ninth annual symposium also featured speakers William A. Ambrose of the state's Bureau of Economic Geology speaking on advanced oil and gas recovery in Texas while Phil Thompson of Mobius Risk Group discussed energy risk management trends and market practices.

Proceeds from the annual event benefit the East Texas Oil Museum, chairman Mark Goloby reminded the crowd, thanking museum director Merlyn Holmes and her staff for continuing to tell the story of the oil and gas industry.

The 2018 symposium included an opening address from seven-term United States Congressman Louie Gohmert.

Jumping from land rights and political battles to the Endanger Species Act and other environmental issues, the fiery representative from Texas' 1st Congressional District described an ongoing battle in Washington, D.C. and across the country.

"President Trump certainly wants to have a clean environment," Gohmert said, "wants to save the planet but at the same time doesn't want to be foolhardy about it."

He defended embattled EPA chief Scott Pruitt, facing an ethics probe at the agency amid multiple allegations from lawmakers and staffers.

"He's doing a great job," Gohmert insisted. "That's why he's coming under fire like crazy. That's what happens when you stand up in Washington. He knows that to get things done we've got to rein in the EPA."

An oil and gas attorney from the early 1970s, Darby said he's well-versed in the ups and downs of the oil and gas industry.

"I've been dead broke three times in my business career," he added, "but something about this industry keeps you going, keeps you getting off the map."

Representing nine counties in the Permian Basin, "Oil and gas is part of our DNA out there. We, with you, have suffered through all the pits and valleys this industry seems to thrust upon us" and continue to enjoy success when it comes: "I'm keenly attuned to some of the challenges facing those areas. The economics are there – \$64 a barrel



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is good wages, and we're able to make a profit."

The success of one fuels the other, Darby added, with the billions paid by the oil and gas industry making up a critical injection of funds for the state, local school districts and local governments.

By the numbers, there were 325,000 people employed in the oil and gas industry in the past year, he noted, representing 39 percent of all such jobs nationwide. Texas also led the nation last year in businesses linked to oil and gas – 12,000 of them.

The average industry job paid 132 percent more than the average job in the private sector, Darby added, and in 2017 Texas led the nation in total oil and gas payroll at \$41.9 billion, 46 percent of the total oil and gas payroll nationwide.

He believes in strong public education, transportation, good roads and good jobs.

"That's what your state government should be about," he said, "providing those essentials services to this region and other parts of the state."



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