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## As Ukraine Fights For Its Life, Philadelphia Remains Dormant

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Just north of Philadelphia International Airport and south of the Philadelphia sports Stadium complex lies the Port of Philadelphia, one of the largest freshwater ports in the world. So strategically located is the Port of Philadelphia, it also lies just a few miles north from the oil and gas refineries of Marcus Hook, Pennsylvania, and three hours south of some of the most abundant natural gas wells in the world, located in Northeastern Pennsylvania.

Logically, the Port of Philadelphia should be central to the relief of Ukraine by being able to export large amounts of natural gas that could fill the gap for our NATO allies of the natural gas supplies that Russia is now cutting off to Poland and Bulgaria, along with ending Nord Stream 2 that would have increased supply to Germany and the Czech Republic. That is not happening, of course, as most of the natural gas bounty just 120 miles from Philadelphia can't even reach the City due to lack of pipeline capacity. Indeed Philadelphia itself has failed to develop a natural gas export terminal. Thus, while Ukraine fights for its life and Vladimir Putin threatens nuclear war, Philadelphia remains dormant, hardly participating at all in the fight against Vladimir Putin's aggression.

It is possible that Philadelphia's slumber may be ending, if only by external pressure. In April, Pennsylvania State Representative Marina White sponsored House Bill (HB) 2458, which, if approved by the Pennsylvania Senate and signed by the Governor, would create a task force to study how to establish a liquid natural gas export terminal in Philadelphia.

The bill was passed by the Pennsylvania State House of Representatives on April 13.

State Representative White is a rarity – a Republican Representative from Philadelphia. Philadelphia is a city that hasn't had a Republican Mayor since 1951. Democrats outnumber Republicans by a 5 to 1 margin. For the last 8 years, Pennsylvania also has had a Democratic Governor, Tom Wolf. Wolf has not been kind to the natural gas industry, which has become huge in Pennsylvania, but he hasn't acted entirely in opposition either, unlike his neighbors in New Jersey, New York, and Maryland. Similarly, Philadelphia remains inconsistent in its actions regarding the future of natural gas in the City.

In 2019, Philadelphia City Council approved a new natural gas plant for Philadelphia Gas Works.

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As mentioned, it has taken no action until now however to build an export terminal, which would appear to be a logical step.

Last year, Philadelphia pledged to become carbon neutral by 2050.

At no time did the City government make its feelings known about the pipelines that have been proposed from Northeast Pennsylvania which would serve Philadelphia, thus securing its energy needs. However the City did not make any moves to ban natural gas from future buildings as did San Francisco and New York City. While that means that Philadelphia hasn't unwittingly increased its possible need on Russian natural gas in the same way that New York City has, it also hasn't taken any affirmative steps to use its strategic location and excellent facilities to become part of the answer to Vladimir Putin.

Not surprisingly, the local elite is appalled by anything that might mean new investment in fossil fuel resources. The lead mass circulation newspaper, the [Philadelphia Inquirer](#), has editorialized against fracking and claimed that Pennsylvania prioritizes the process over public health.

A major local environmental organization, the Delaware Riverkeeper Network, has consistently and vociferously demanded that all fracking be stopped in Pennsylvania.

One of the leading Democratic candidates for Governor, Attorney General Josh Shapiro of suburban Montgomery County, actually indicted members of the industry last year, extracting a payment from Range ResourcesRRC

+6.8%, and is seeking to punish other natural gas companies.

In many ways the idleness of the Port is a typical Philadelphia story. Unable to agree on which path to take, the City often twittles its thumbs as other places step up. Now it appears that even Germany may agree to embargo Russian gas. Should that happen, an even larger natural gas supply shortage would exist in Europe in the immediate future. Despite the best wishes of many in the environmental community, the current alternative to natural gas isn't renewable energy, it's coal. That of course means worse pollution for the planet.

Philadelphia could help and provide an alternative that would be better for the environment, assist the people of Ukraine, and of our allies who are also helping Ukraine, and provide large amounts of good jobs to local people. Instead, the City sits and waits, while all around South Philadelphia one hears only the sounds of silence.

#### **ATTORNEYS MENTIONED**

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