



**Public Input of Virginia E. Palacios
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Railroad Commission of Texas Open Meeting
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Juneteenth is this week and Independence Day is just a couple of weeks away. It's a good time to think about the role of government in protecting our rights to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." I was glad to see that Railroad Commission staff are now getting consistent training on how to apply rules and processes through the Boots on the Ground initiative. And it's great to see that the Critical Infrastructure Division is offering a way to let operators upload data about their systems to the Mapping Automation Portal in real-time. These steps toward transparency and effective enforcement are much-needed.

The Railroad Commission's work to protect Texans' rights is ongoing and must continue to evolve. Communities that spend months or years protesting permit applications or that spend their own money hiring lawyers and experts to defend them have been met with a process at the Railroad Commission that inevitably results in permit approvals. It feels counter to our American values.

The EPA just announced a rulemaking to grant the Railroad Commission primacy over Class VI carbon dioxide injection wells, and they'll be accepting public comments until July 31st. In just a few months, the Railroad Commission may be faced with granting permits for injection wells that are designed to mitigate climate-warming emissions - even though none of you agrees with the scientific consensus on climate change. The commission's role in approving permits includes protecting the rights of all Texans to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

Granting permits for risky infrastructure just for the sake of making money does not support those rights.

We want to see decision-making that weighs the interests of everyday Texans over the interests of industry. This includes the commission exercising your right to say no: whether to flaring rule exceptions, or waste pit permits, or plugging extensions, or injection wells. We know that rules alone don't keep our water and air clean. How the rules are applied and enforced matters.