

Search  | Clear, 79 F (26 C) ☀ | RSS | |

SECTIONS:

- Arts · Politics · Crime
- Sports · Food ·
- Opinion · NOLA ·
- Lagniappe

THE  
Defender Picks

MERCREDI

September 24th

6x6: Six 10-Minute Plays  
Midcity Theatre, 7:30p.m.  
*A staged reading perfect for short attention spans*

Richard Buckner, HAWN  
BEATnik, 8p.m.  
*California singer-songwriter*

Walter "Wolfman"  
Washington  
d.b.a., 10 p.m.  
*Fiery blues on Frenchmen every week*

Felice Brothers  
Tipitina's, 10p.m.  
*New York-based folk rock band, plus Spirit Family Reunion (\$15)*

Horse Thief  
Circle Bar, 10p.m.  
*Psychedelic folk rock on tour from Oklahoma City (\$5)*

JEUDI

September 25th

Jazz in the Park  
Armstrong Park, 4-8p.m.  
*This week ft. Russell Batiste and Friends, Wild Tchoupitoulas Mardi Gras Indians, Mike Soulman Baptiste*

Ogden After Hours  
Ogden Museum, 6-8p.m.  
*This week ft. Tim Laughlin and The New-Orleans Review launch party*

Emery Van Hook Sonnier:  
"Food as Medicine"  
New Orleans Athletic Club,  
7p.m.  
*Associate Director of famers' market org discusses merits of eating local*

A Lie of the Mind  
Midcity Theatre, 7:30p.m.  
*Sam Shepard's award-winning play looks deep into families' anguish (\$20)*

The Geraniums  
Circle Bar, 10p.m.  
*Moody local rock foursome (\$5)*

Rue Fiva  
Maison, 10p.m.  
*Feel-good music with influence from Afro-Funk to Zydeco*

Big Freedia, Partners N  
Crime, 5th Ward Weebie  
Tipitina's, 10p.m.  
*Bounce all-stars celebrate Q93's DJ Ro's Birthday*

NOLA

# DRILLING FOR ANSWERS

*Pols, Academics, & Industry Weigh In at Gulf Energy Forum*

by Chris Staudinger

The Atlantic Magazine flew south to host "An American Town Hall" on energy and the midterm elections yesterday.

Industry representatives, academics, and politicians sat on four small panels and discussed fracking on the Northshore, commuter trains to Baton Rouge, Mary Landrieu's senate race, and many things in between.



Mayor Mitch

Louis Finkel, the Executive Vice President of Government Affairs at the American Petroleum Institute, which underwrote the forum, began by marveling at his childhood memories of long lines at filling stations in the seventies, when Americans were anxiously unsure about the flow of oil and power.

Gone, apparently, are those days, according to most panelists, because the United States has become the world's largest natural gas producer and will soon become the world's largest oil producer. One panelist remarked that some of Louisiana's liquid natural gas terminals, built in the last ten years to prepare for dwindling domestic resources, have needed to be converted to export natural gas to other countries.

The new state of fossil fuel abundance was clear. 4,000 active production platforms dot the Gulf. Two billion dollars for an offshore drilling project was considered a lowball number, according to Dr. Eric Smith of the Tulane Energy Institute. Over seventy-five percent of the nation's offshore energy production comes from the Gulf. 412,000 Louisiana residents are employed by the oil and gas industry, and their wages bring \$24 billion into the state, according to Finkel from the API.

Atlantic's Washington editor-in-chief Steve Clemons made efforts to steer the conversation into a broader field of energy options than those of oil and gas, but few would veer away from oil and gas, and none denied that the industry is fundamental to Louisiana's economic future.

Clemons had asked Lieutenant Governor Jay Dardenne about renewables and likened the oil and gas boom in Louisiana to that of North Dakota, where republican Senator John Hoeven encourages the aggressive development of wind and energy resources alongside his state's booming fossil fuel extraction. Dardenne said that renewables were "a big component of what needs to take place." He mentioned that Louisiana's timber resources stand to benefit from skyrocketing European demand for wood pellets that fuel renewably fired power plants.

**NODEF NEWSLETTER**  
NOLA's #1 Digital Daily  
Straight to your inbox  
**SUBSCRIBE**

**Your employer is required to support breast feeding.**

**www.nolamom.org**

Greater New Orleans Breastfeeding Awareness Coalition

**INDYWOOD ART HOUSE MOVIE THEATER**  
Showing LOCAL & INDIE FILMS  
\$7 TIX BYOB

**NOW SHOWING: SEPT 19-SEPT 24**

**RICH HILL  
GOD HELP THE GIRL**

628 ELYSIAN FIELDS  
in the Marigny  
**INDYWOOD.ORG**

But Dardenne was steadfast in his support of the energy sector. And he, like panelists Eric Smith and Chris John, the President of the Louisiana Mid Continent Oil and Gas Association, warned against any regulations that could drive away Louisiana’s golden industry. Asked what a “smart, cohesive energy policy” would look like on a federal level, Dardenne said it would be free-flowing: “A state like Louisiana that has the God-given natural resources that are beneath our soil should be recognized and taken advantage of from a policy standpoint for a country and not be punitive towards a state that has those natural resources.”

He said, “I think the state has done a fairly good job” at regulating the oil and gas industry.”

From the audience, Steve Murchie, director of the Gulf Restoration Network, challenged the statement, saying, “In the time that the forum takes this morning, we’re going to lose three football fields of our coastal wetlands, and the oil and gas industry is responsible, conservatively, for 400 square miles of the coastal (land) that’s already been lost...The state is choosing not to exercise it’s existing jurisdiction over wells and other drilling activities in the coastal zone that are no longer in production - to require them to remove their spoil banks, fill in the canals, and mitigate those sites. So my question is, why aren’t you enforcing the law?”

Dardenne, who has declared his candidacy for the 2015 Governor’s race, said, “I don’t know specifically which one you’re talking about and what they’ve done.”

Walt Leger, speaker pro tem of the Louisiana House of Representatives and vocal advocate for the coast, remarked that the state and the oil and gas industry are “inseparable.” The forum did its best to untangle that relationship and what it means for a place that has been both incredibly enriched and grossly battered by the energy industry.

Mayor Landrieu, another potential candidate for the 2015 governor’s race, said, “What Louisiana people have tried to do and struggled to do is to find the appropriate balance between drilling and restoring and also being environmentally sensitive, and there’s no greater issue to reflect that than the disappearance of the coast.”

In explaining that balance, he walked a thin line between coastal advocate and oil and gas enthusiast, saying, “The answer is not drill baby drill or stop drilling at all. Those are not opportunities that are going to be seized in any real way.”

“If we’re gonna restore the coast, we have to stop doing the thing that’s destroying the coast, and we have to take the money that the coast is producing and put it back into restoration efforts. And then, through technology, we have to find a way to drill in a balanced way and to drill more rather than less.”

“The thing that’s destroying the coast,” it is presumed, is the damming of replenishing freshwater behind levees, as well as the creation and abandonment of oil canals that starve wetlands throughout the coastal zone.

Regarding the controversial Southeast Louisiana Flood Protection Authority lawsuit that seeks punitive damages from 97 oil and gas companies that dredged canals in the region, Landrieu said, “This is pretty simple. If you broke it, you should fix it.” But, he added later, “A lawsuit is a nuclear option. You could go through years and years of litigation - or the oil and gas companies could come to the table and, in a very thoughtful and progressive way, say ‘Listen, if we’re producing wealth, we’re going to peel a piece off of the top and direct it back to restoring the land.’”

**INDYWOOD THEATER**

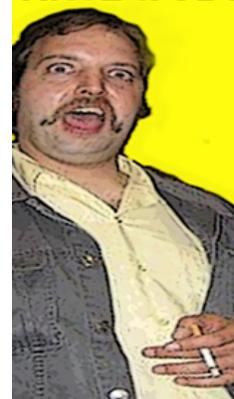
**NHFF  
NOLA  
LOST  
ART FEST**

**SEPT 25-28**

Donate



BUY  
SELL & TRADE  
VINYL & CDS



NOLA's best selection  
of e-cigarettes,  
e-juice & vaporizers.



RDA's  
Starter kits  
150+ flavors  
Free tasting bar  
Open daily at 11am

(504) 309 - 8134  
4507 Magazine St.

Click For Info.

At the end of the Mayor's segment, Linda Stone, director of Global Green New Orleans, stood in the audience, a little perplexed, and said, "We're in a climate crisis. I had expected more discussion of climate change and how we are going to address it." Later, in an email, she said, "I was pretty disturbed about all the oil and gas talk and all the justification of why we need oil and gas development, while every day there is news about climate related problems. Today in fact there was an article on the front page of the TP saying that United Nations climate scientists put out an alert because atmospheric carbon is higher than its ever been. The lack of awareness or concern in that room was awful."

Clemons seemed timid in his approach to the climate change question, and he approached the subject cautiously by way of Katrina or the coast. Once he said, "Louisiana does not pop up at the forefront of many people's (minds) of being a kind of leader in that area."

And, to laughter, Walt Leger said, "I do have one of my colleagues who says that climate change is a hoax."

He could be referring to State Representative Lenar Whitney, R-Houma, who won national media attention when she released a video that called climate change "the greatest deception in the history of mankind" and told viewers that any ten-year-old with a thermometer could disprove the science. David Wasserman of the Cook Political Report called Whitney, who is running for a US Congressional seat in the 6th District, "the most frightening candidate in seven years interviewing congressional hopefuls."

There did seem to be consensus that a move towards renewables was necessary, but only after we settled into the era of natural gas and deep drilling. Bob Thomas, director of the Loyola University Center for Environmental Communication, acknowledged that the new gas boom was unavoidable and beneficial to the state, but he worried that this "low hanging fruit" would distract research and development of renewables. "We will hit that peak. You can debate it all you want," he said, "and we need to prepare for the future."



 **James Burnette**  
 Tar sands oil and high volume horizontal hydrofracking for natural gas are pacts with the devil, Steve. They're filthy processes that gobble up huge quantities of water... and end up polluting it. By the time the responsible corporations are brought to justice, they will have disbanded, their board members long gone with their loot, leaving the taxpayers to clean up their messes. The corporate criminals will be in the business of gouging us for clean water by then.  
 Reply · Like · 1 · September 12 at 9:01pm

Facebook social plugin

Like 43 people like this.

*Tagged with:*  
 ATLANTIC MAGAZINE ENERGY GULF MAYOR LANDRIEU



**2801 Marais St**  
*in the Marigny*  
**504-947-0038**

MON-SAT 9AM-4:30PM



ADVERTISE  
 with  
 NOLA Defender

*Contributors:*

Dead Huey Long, Emma Boyce, Elizabeth Davas, Ian Hoch, Lindsay Mack, Anna Gaca, Jason Raymond, Lee Matalone, Phil Yiannopoulos, Joe Shriner, Chris Staudinger, Chef Anthony Scario, Tierney Monaghan, Stacy Coco, Rob Ingraham,

*Staff Writers*

Cheryl Castjohn, Sam Nelson

*Listings Editor*

Anna Gaca  
*Art Listings*  
 Cheryl Castjohn

*Photographers*

Brandon Roberts, Rachel June, Daniel Paschall

*Film Critic*

Jason Raymond

*Puzzler*

Paolo Roy

*Art Director:*

Michael Weber, B.A.

*Editor:*

B. E. Mintz

*Published Daily by*

Mincd Media, Inc.  
*Editor Emeritus*

Stephen Babcock