



Issue 20, 2019

● [Trump Aides Try to Quash Tax Hike Rumors Amid Infrastructure Talks](#)

"The White House is reassuring conservative leaders that it has no plans to hike the gas tax to help fund a massive infrastructure package that President Donald Trump hopes to negotiate with Congress."

Why this is important: Bipartisan cooperation in Washington, DC over an infrastructure bill in 2019 seems already difficult to sustain. While the April 2019 meeting between President Donald Trump, Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, and Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer yielded positive sound bites and a tentative path forward on this long-discussed topic, the elephant still remaining in the room is how to pay for the rumored \$2 trillion package. The White House reassured conservative leaders it has no intention of offering an increase to the federal gas tax, last increased in 1993 with widespread bipartisan support, to pay for the plan. This would seem to insert a substantial roadblock to any further talks with Congressional leaders on increased investments in infrastructure projects such as roads, bridges, airports, flood control projects and high-speed rail. While the President has long wished for another policy win as he gears up for re-election, especially a win supported by Democrats, such a win may be easier discussed than it will be achieved. --- [Jason C. Pizatella](#)

● [Coal Still Fuels Economic Fire in Pennsylvania, Industry Study Reports](#)

"A new study - conducted by the Allegheny Conference on Community Development and commissioned by the Pennsylvania Coal Alliance - found that coal mining accounts for nearly \$7 billion in economic activity in the state, including \$4.6 billion directly from mining and \$2.27 billion from indirect and induced contributions."

Why this is important: A recent study shows coal still has a significant economic impact in Pennsylvania. Last year, the state mined 47.2 million tons of coal with 6,000 miners and 11,000 support jobs. That accounted for a \$7 billion economic impact. However, electric generation by coal in the state has dropped to 20 percent. --- [Mark E. Heath](#)

● [BP and Shell Join Companies Lobbying for a U.S. Carbon Tax](#)

"Oil companies, automakers and consumer products manufacturers will unleash a campaign for a U.S. tax on carbon dioxide emissions even though it may lead to higher prices for their products."

Why this is important: It should come as no surprise that several major oil companies are supporting a carbon tax. At \$40 per ton, it's a relatively minor cost they can pass on to consumers, and it is too small to really reduce demand for their product. The proposal comes with the huge added benefit to the oil companies of replacing greenhouse gas regulations and shielding them from climate-related lawsuits. For those reasons, the tax is likely to be a non-starter with the Democrats. --- [David L. Yaussy](#)

● [Columbia Gas Files Suit Against Maryland in Pipeline Dispute](#)

"Columbia Gas Transmission LLC filed a condemnation proceeding against the State of Maryland and is requesting a preliminary injunction to receive immediate access to the easement Maryland's Board of Public Works denied in January for the Eastern Panhandle Expansion project."

Why this is important: This is another example demonstrating that pipelines galvanize opposition. Columbia has a dozen other pipelines running under the Potomac in Maryland alone. This is much shorter and smaller than the others. However, the longer a gas pipeline remains unfinished, the higher likelihood that opposition will gain a foothold, whether in public sentiment, motivated activists, political winds, or some combination. While the approval process is drawn-out, it is unlikely to be compressed. The lesson is to move as quickly as possible after approval. Time is not an ally of a pipeline company.

--- [Matthew P. Heiskell](#)

● [Are Electric Vehicles Really Better for the Environment?](#)

"From manufacturing concerns to battery power sources as well as overall autonomy, EVs have been under scrutiny from skeptics."

Why this is important: For every new Tesla or other EV model that hits the market, there are those skeptics who question how "green" these new marvels of technological advancement really are. The questions center primarily upon the argument that the manufacturing process of the long-range batteries and other EV components leaves behind greater environmental pollution in the long-run than do its internal combustion counterparts. The fact remains the mining and extraction of rare earth metals that make up the composition of these components can and do contribute to carbon emissions. As EV technology becomes more mainstream, it will no doubt become more efficient and even more sustainable over time. At the end of the day, look for more recycling options in the very near future that will be able to accept the same lithium ion batteries in your car as found in your iPhone. --- [Jason C. Pizatella](#)

● [Contura Announces a New Coal Project in Logan County, WV](#)

"Contura Energy Inc., which emerged from the bankruptcy of Alpha Natural Resources, announced a new metallurgical coal project in Logan County in its 2019 first quarter earnings report."

Why this is important: Contura Energy has announced plans to open a new metallurgical coal mine in southern West Virginia. The Lynn Branch Project is the second new metallurgical coal mine to be announced in recent weeks for that part of the state. The project is scheduled to be online by the second quarter of 2020 and will produce between 1.0 and 1.2 million tons of high vol metallurgical coal per year. Contura estimates the mine has a 25 million ton reserve. The West Virginia coal market remains driven by metallurgical coal and the strong export market for it. --- [Mark E. Heath](#)

● [Australia's Climate Wars Set to Heat Up After Coal Champion Scott Morrison Clinches Win](#)

"Prime Minister Scott Morrison's surprise victory in Australia's election was a win for the coal industry and ensures the debate about tackling climate change will continue to polarize the nation."

Why this is important: Australia was poised to elect a Labor government that had ambitious targets for greenhouse gas reductions. However, the conservatives--with a more nuanced approach to climate change--ended up winning. In an election in which global warming was a major issue, the concerns about climate change were trumped by the potential loss of energy jobs and increases in electricity prices. --- [David L. Yaussy](#)

● [WVU Geology/Geography Department Receives Software Gift Worth \\$8.2 Million](#)

"Students within the West Virginia University Department of Geology and Geography will have a new tool at their disposal for learning how best to find new resources for sustained development."

Why this is important: A recent gift from LMKR, an international petroleum technology company, is poised to give West Virginia University students and faculty a leg-up on the competition with greater access to industry-leading software. This donation offers the WVU academic community highly sophisticated tools that optimize the efficiency of petroleum and natural gas exploration and production. This software will prepare students for real-world situations and job opportunities where the competition is already fierce and widespread. --- [Jason C. Pizatella](#)

● [The Future of Indian Electricity: Supply Scenarios of Coal Use by 2030](#)

"Apart from RE, the elements of the Indian electricity sector transition today include near zero energy and peak deficits, and stranded capacity in the coal sector, projected slowdown in demand owing to structural factors and energy efficiency, and electrification of new applications such as cooking, transport and industry."

Why this is important: India remains one of the world's growing electrical markets. This study shows some slowdown in electric demand growth is possible by 2030, but believes India's use of imported coal will climb to a range of 129 to 198 million tons by 2030. Such increases will help steam coal exports. --- [Mark E. Heath](#)

● [EIA Energy Statistics](#)

Here is a round-up of the latest statistics concerning the energy industry.

[PETROLEUM](#)

[This Week in Petroleum](#)

[Weekly Petroleum Status Report](#)

[NATURAL GAS](#)

[Short-Term Energy Outlook - Natural Gas](#)

[Natural Gas Weekly Update](#)

[Natural Gas Futures Prices](#)

[COAL](#)

[Short-Term Energy Outlook - Coal](#)

[Coal Markets](#)

[Weekly Coal Production](#)

[RENEWABLES](#)

[Short-Term Energy Outlook](#)

[Monthly Biodiesel Production Report](#)

[Monthly Densified Biomass Fuel Report](#)

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