



What They're Saying About Natural Gas Bans

A worrying trend is gaining traction in California, the Boston suburbs, and a few other communities across the country. In the name of meeting ambitious climate goals, a few dozen cities are considering – or have passed – ordinances that look to limit or outright ban natural gas use.

But the bans are meeting resistance. Consumers and businesses concerned over the potential impact on lower-income families, local restaurants and others have been pushing back. Some states legislatures have passed or are considering legislation preventing their cities from forbidding the use of natural gas.

Here's a sample of what they're saying about how these efforts could end up harming the very communities that the bans' proponents claim to be protecting.

Natural Gas Bans Disproportionally Hurt Vulnerable Groups



Mark Morial, President of the National Urban League, pointed out that even though energy prices disproportionately impact people of color, these communities are oftentimes left out of the discussion:

“ Generally speaking, people are debating these issues in some instances without consultation with the leaders of the African American communities and neighborhoods affected by these issues. ”

Bill Malcolm, senior legislative representative from AARP, said that the bans are concerning for ratepayers who earn less money:

“ I just checked the numbers and natural gas is now at \$1.85/MMBtu, and just to put that in perspective, in 2012 it was actually \$12/MMBtu. So where is the new power for the new load going to come from? ”

Natural Gas Bans Will Harm Local Restaurants and Other Industries



The California Restaurant Association is suing Berkeley over its ban on natural gas in many new buildings that went into effect January 1, 2020:

“ Whether searing steaks, charring vegetables, or stir-frying noodles, chefs and cooks rely on the most important tool in the creation of a dish – fire. There are also economic impacts. Many restaurants use gas to heat water and space and for other appliances. This ban will raise costs to build and operate restaurants. Restaurant owners may simply choose not to move to or construct new buildings because they will not have access to natural gas. ”

The temperature control needed for much of restaurant cooking requires visually gauging the cooking flame, manipulating the intensity of the heat, and being able to scale the temperature up or down in a split second. Thus, the ordinance will reduce the types of cuisines available to Berkeley residents. It will also make meaningless much of the culinary training that some of the finest chefs have received. Simply put, a ban on natural gas is not something to which restaurants can adapt. ”



Jerry Scott, Senior Vice President at RH Peterson:

“The hearth and patio industry has worked hard to provide products that increase the quality of home and family life. From the barbecue to celebrate a special occasion, to a gathering around a fireplace during a holiday, these moments are even more valued today with our busy, hectic lives. In fact, recent surveys show that outdoor rooms with exterior fire features and kitchens are among the top features that home buyers are looking for. Fireplaces and stoves that provide efficient zone heating add to the comfort of home life, while reducing energy use and costs. Many of these products use natural gas as a fuel source and would disappear with a natural gas ban.”

Alicia Kennedy, a food writer and podcast host, shared the story of a Brooklyn tapas bar in her article, “Electric stoves are a home cook’s nightmare.”:

“Francisco Anton of La Ñapa in Brooklyn, where the plancha, deep fryer, and stoves all run on electricity in a kitchen built from scratch in what was once a corner bodega. “A gas stove can stay working fine with the proper treatment for 10-plus years,” he says. “Electrical equipment? Every day after the first year is a gift.”

Robert W. Phillips, a professional chef and chairman of the Chef De Cuisine Association of California:

“This ban will slow down the process of cooking and reduce a chef’s control over the amount and intensity of heat which is needed to prepare food appropriately. It’s like taking paint away from a painter and asking them to create a masterpiece.”

Natural Gas Bans Eliminate Consumer Choice



Takoma Park, a suburb of Washington, D.C., passed a non-binding ban that directs the community to remove all the fossil fuels from the city – pressuring residents to ban natural gas appliances and gas stations to move outside city boundaries:

“The number of times the word ‘require’ is used in this is stunning...Don’t tell me what to do with my table scraps.”

Rep. Bob Thorpe, an Arizona state representative from Flagstaff, discussing bipartisan legislation that preempts cities from enacting natural gas bans:

“It’s ridiculous that any government will get down to that level that they’d tell someone how they can heat their house.”

Glenn Hamer, President and CEO of the Arizona Chamber of Commerce:

“A poll of more than 1,000 natural gas customers conducted in late 2019 found that 92% of respondents statewide prefer having the choice of using natural gas in their home, and 82% of respondents were strongly opposed to natural gas being eliminated from their homes.”

Kevin Messner, Senior Vice President of Policy & Government Relations at the Association for Home Appliance Manufacturers:

“There is consumer interest in having a choice and having both.”

Jot Condie, President and CEO of the California Restaurant Association:

“We believe that the Berkeley ban represents the start of efforts to ban or severely restrict all natural gas use...It’s impossible to overstate how irresponsible this is at a time when millions of Californians find themselves in the dark due to planned power outages. The citizens of California need reliable and affordable energy that allows them to choose what appliances they have in their homes and businesses.”

Natural Gas Bans Ignore Efficiency and Environmental Benefits of Gas Appliances



Zilvinas Silenas, president of the Foundation for Economic Education:

“Burning gas to make electricity is only about 40% efficient, on average. The environmental effect of switching from gas stoves to electric stoves depends largely on how the electricity is produced... Given current U.S. electricity production, if you banned natural gas stoves across the country, only 2 out of 10 would be powered by renewable energy – the remaining eight would be powered by electricity generated from coal (three), nuclear (two), and natural gas (three).”

Danielle Williams, spokeswoman for Massachusetts utility National Grid:

“Natural gas has “an enduring role to play in bringing about a clean energy future, and that customers should have the ability to choose their energy source.”



Photo by Tim Evanson