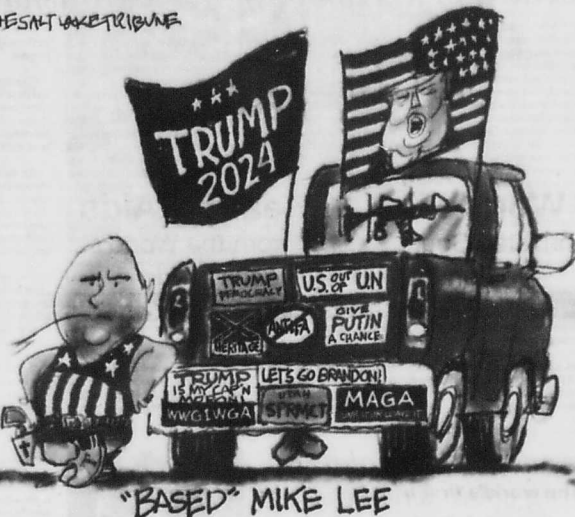


OPINION

BAGLEY'S VIEW » "BASED MIKE LEE"

BAGLEY'S VIEW
THE SALT LAKE TRIBUNE



"BASED" MIKE LEE

Utah runners must support EPA methane rule

Utah is a runner's paradise, loaded with extensive trail networks in the many alpine mountain ranges from the Wasatch Mountains in the north to the La Sal in the southeastern part of the state. Utah also boasts incredible desert running in our national parks like Zion and Canyonlands as well as across our famous Bureau of Land Management areas. Utah runners regularly partake in the many trail races held throughout the state year-round, such as Moab's Red Hot and the internationally famous Speedgoat 50k held in Little Cottonwood Canyon above Salt Lake City.

Unfortunately, Utah is also famous for poor air quality and is commonly ranked as one of the most polluted states in the country. And global warming is damaging the places we love to run in profound ways. Longer and hotter summers combined with unpredictable winters lead to water scarcity and changes to the unique ecosystems we visit every day. More frequent natural disasters, such as extreme wildfires, not only devastate landscapes and communities but also degrade air quality and increasingly close access to vast areas of public lands limiting opportunities to recreate outside. Healthy public lands bring quality of life, visitors and business investment to nearby communities through outdoor recreation, but only if we ensure the responsible management of those lands.

Today, methane waste and pollution from oil and gas production on public lands is a major



JASON KEITH

contributor to our warming planet and is harming the iconic places that bring quality of life to frontline communities, outdoor recreation opportunities and business investment to local economies.

Over a 20-year period, methane is 80 times more potent at warming than carbon dioxide. Fortunately, methane released or burned through oil and gas developments, such as wells and pipelines, can often be controlled through better maintenance and improved monitoring. If methane production continues unchecked, future generations will no longer be able to safely explore our country's great rivers, mountains, forests, deserts and running trails. Poor air quality is not only harmful to the health of our communities but will also harm local economies that rely on access to the outdoors.

A recent report found that Utah's fossil fuel producers released 16 billion cubic feet of natural gas in 2019, with 87% coming from leaks that are often easily fixable and the rest from venting and flaring. Not only is this bad for the environment, but it also imposes a significant economic



KATHLEEN BAKER

toll. This amount of natural gas waste is valued at \$48 million and \$6.7 million in lost revenue to the state in the form of taxes and royalties.

But what can runners do about air quality and the climate crisis? As the largest outdoor recreation group in the U.S., we have an opportunity to support national and state policies that will have meaningful impacts on the environment and the communities most impacted by environmental degradation.

The federal government is taking consequential actions right now to mitigate global warming. Recent rules announced by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) aim to reduce oil and gas methane pollution through sensible approaches that are long overdue, such as using more effective technology to find and fix leaks. The EPA methane rule is poised to be a highly effective and immediate way to reduce methane pollution by instituting new limits that will reduce methane emissions — but it is only the first step. Utah now has two years to develop a strong state-level plan that complies with the emission standards set forth in the federal

methane rule that will improve air quality for residents and all of us who recreate in Utah's great outdoors.

Increasingly global warming is affecting our everyday lives, and through our collective voice runners can influence how our government responds to the climate crisis. Runners for Public Lands (RPL) is a national nonprofit that represents the interests of over 60 million runners across the country, including many who live and recreate in Utah. RPL believes runners can make a difference, and our moment is now.

We hope you'll join us in supporting common-sense federal and state policies that address the climate crisis and protect access to outdoor recreation opportunities for all, including ensuring that Utah develops a strong state plan for the EPA methane rule.

Jason Keith is a board member of Runners for Public Lands, Based in Moab. Jason works with outdoor recreation non-profits on public land access, conservation, and economic development. Jason also co-founded Moab's Burning Up For Air race, held for the first time last April. Kathleen Baker is the executive director of Runners for Public Lands. Kathleen's career spans federal, state, and local government program development, policy implementation, and operations. Kathleen is also the founder and race director of the Mount Laguna Trail Marathon in San Diego, CA. Runners for Public Lands is the 501(c)(3) dedicated to organizing runners for climate action, the protection of public lands, and equitable access to outdoor recreation.

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THE PUBLIC FORUM

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What next, a Smith Tower?

It is extremely concerning that the passage of the upcoming proposal for the renovation of the Delta Center area of Salt Lake City includes a threat to the marvelous Abrahams Hall. It is disheartening that the idea of the hall being torn down, altered or tampered with is even being considered — and worse that the reason is to create a parking lot.

I am a former resident of Salt Lake City and remember well the time when Symphony Hall was built. It was built with a deep and profound love and pride for the city, the entire community and the patrons of the arts. Every aspect of the building was a vision to promote the aesthetics of the city with a respect for all those who frequented it or came to simply admire its beauty. One of the SEC spokespersons commented, "Well, it is 45 years old." What a crass, arrogant and ignorant statement.

It is also upsetting that tax dollars could be used for any of this project. SEC wants a "playground for rich friends" built on the backs of people who will, most likely, never be able to afford to utilize this area. The idea of building residences for wealthy basketball players is an insult to every tax-paying citizen, especially those unable to afford their own housing. What next, a Smith Tower?

Jason Miller
Salt Lake City

RMP vs. Utah Legislature

My gas bill has gone up 15% to 25% every winter for the past few years. I'm paying about 70% more for the same amount of gas as I did three years ago.

Looking back at the recent legislative session, I wondered why the Legislature would want to do the same thing to my electric bill. SR224 pretty much demands that a hefty chunk of my electricity comes from coal, even when other forms of electricity are far cheaper. This is in contrast to Michigan, whose public service commission recently required that utilities provide the lowest cost electricity without favoritism to any type of power.

SR224 was passed in the name of reliability, which is a great concept. Except that Rocky Mountain Power (RMP) is confident it can keep the grid reliable without coal. I have more confidence in RMP's engineering skills than the Legislature's.

It feels odd to say this, but I think RMP has my interests at heart more than our elected officials.

The Legislature was really happy it gave me a small tax cut this year. I wish I wouldn't have to use all that money, and more, to cover the inflation they are causing.

Steve Glaser

Hickory

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The right thing on campuses

Citing "antisemitism" and vandalism, many politicians and administrators of academic institutions are putting down protests against the war in Gaza. We have all had to witness police in riot gear restraining students and faculty in zip ties at many universities around the world, including the University of Utah, and taking them to jails in paddy wagons.

Is this political theater really a response to the protests against the war in the Middle East or is it actually the weaponization of "antisemitism" and the well-being of Jewish people?

Or is it an attack on academic freedom and core values universities stand for? Universities have recently been widely challenged and blocked from teaching about slavery and climate change and conducting research on vaccinations and other pharmacological substances.

History validated the protests against the Vietnam War. Protesting the slaughter of Palestinians by Israel with weapons supplied by the United States is the right thing to do.

Protesting against bigotry, especially antisemitism and Islamophobia is the right thing.

Protesting the militarization of police is the right thing.

Promoting debate and discussion and the search for truth and justice in universities is the right thing.

Carolyn Brickson
Salt Lake City