

# **Unconventional Politics of Unconventional Gas: Environmental Reframing and Policy Change**

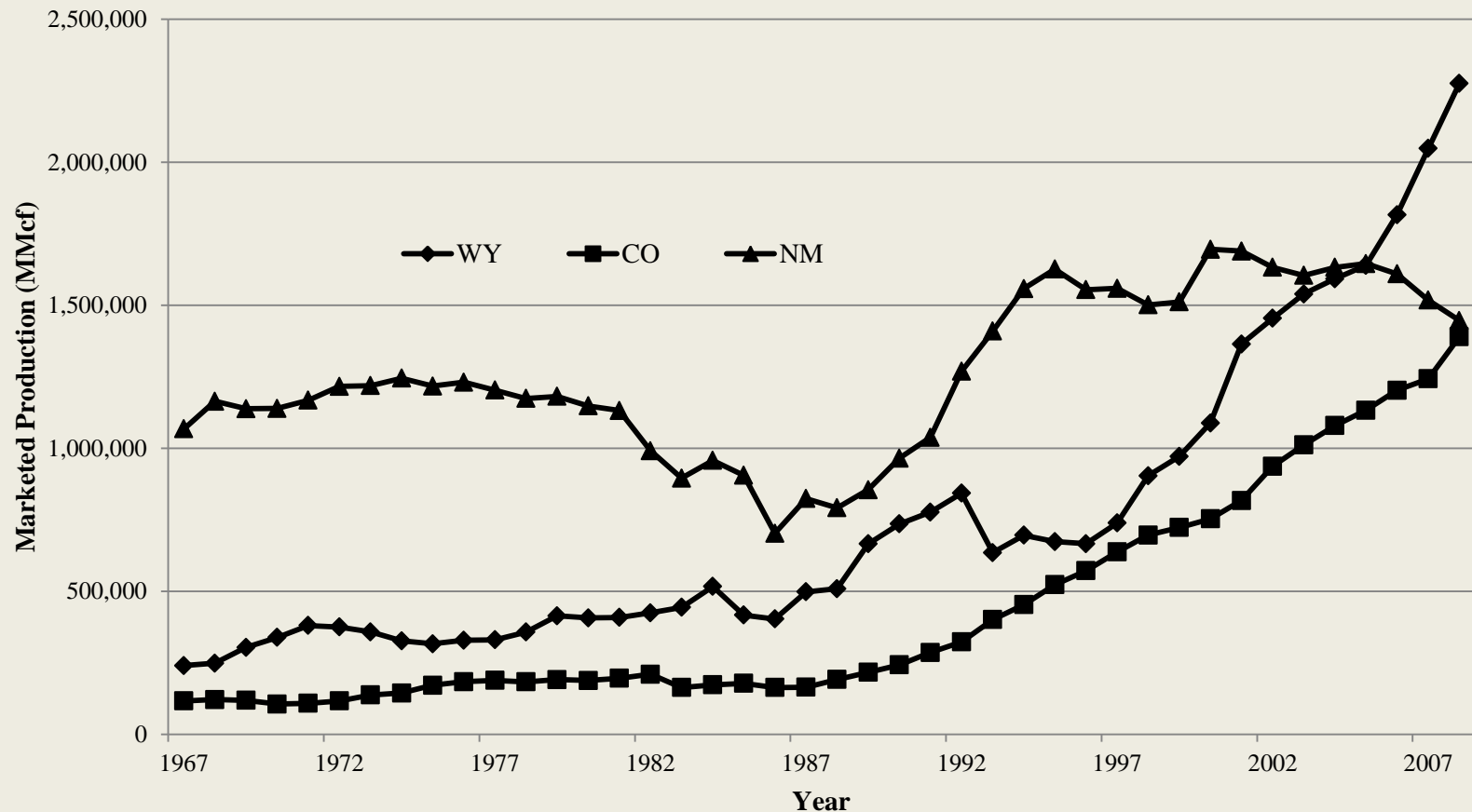
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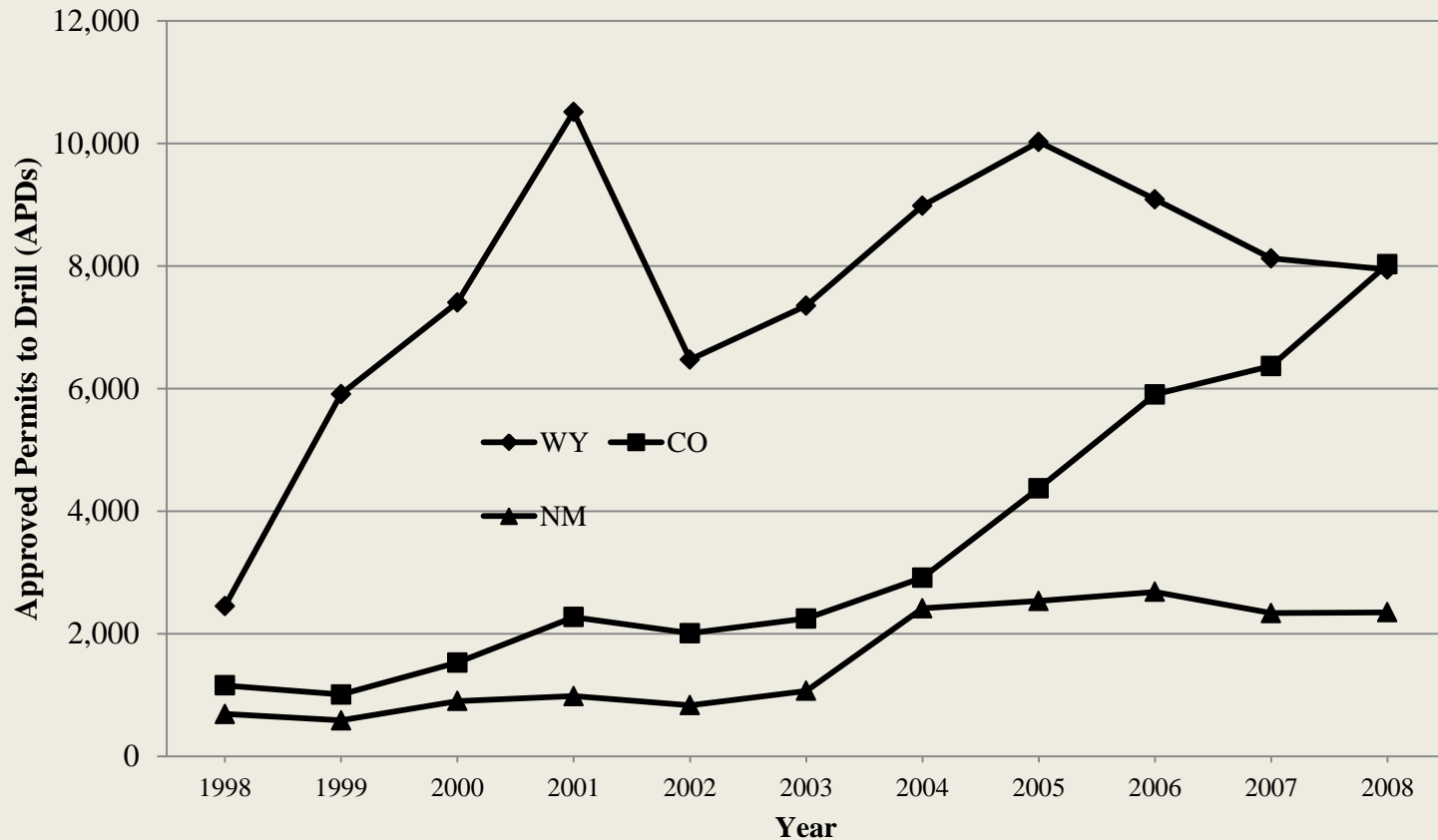
Bowling Green State University

# Natural Gas Production and the Long Boom of Western Development



Data Source: Energy Information Administration, 2008

# Natural Gas Approved Permits to Drill: WY, CO, NM



Data Sources: COGCC, WOGCC, EMNR 2008

# **Jonah Field, Pinedale, WY**

## **Photo © Ecoflight**



# Unconventional Politics and Gas

- ❑ Unconventional Coalitions
  - ❑ Ranchers, environmentalists, property rights advocates, recreationists, county commissioners, etc.
- ❑ Unconventional Gas
  - ❑ Technology, tax breaks, and prices
  - ❑ Defined
- ❑ Unique Problems and Value Battles

# Research Questions

- ❑ What is the relationship between competing interest group framing efforts?
- ❑ What is the relationship between interest group and state legislative framing?
- ❑ Is framing analysis a viable method of measuring policy change?

# Significance and Contribution

- Language Matters
  - Framing within the Narrative Policy Framework
- Institutional measure of policy change (new)
  - Framing and policy change
- Interest Group and State Legislative Framing
  - Interrelationships
  - Reframing

# Theory and Methods

- Narrative Policy Framework
  - Framing: the way people conceptualize and articulate a policy issue (competitive, evolving, textual)
  
- Comparative Case Study
  - WY, CO, NM (Boom time)
  - Interest Groups (pro- and anti-status quo)
  - State Legislatures
  - Qualitative Methods



# Methods

## ❑ Framing Analyses

- ❑ Categories: Environment, economy, land-use, democracy, federalism, policy surrogates, condensation symbols
- ❑ Interest Group public documents
- ❑ State Legislature natural gas bills

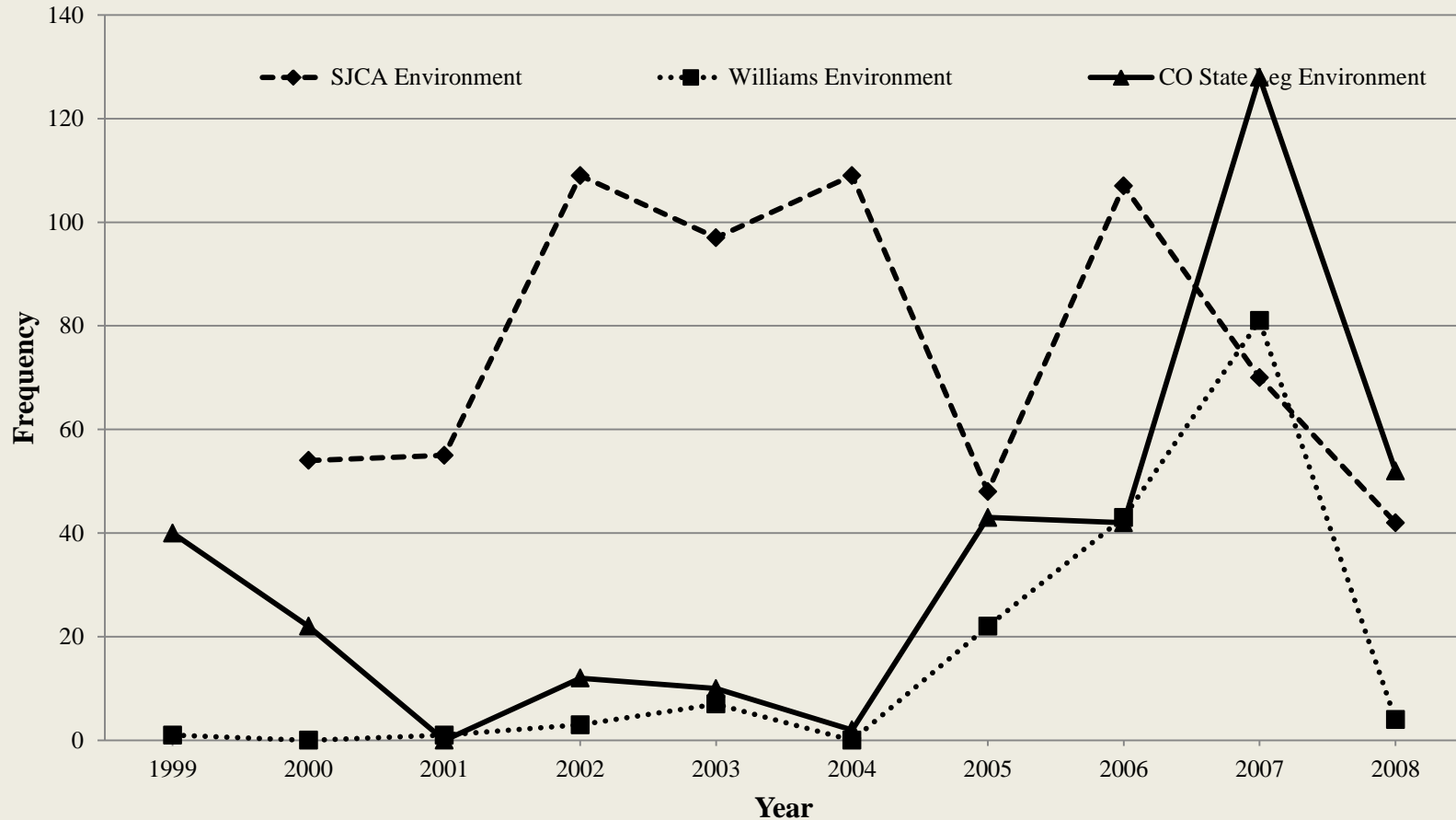
# Hypotheses – Interest Groups

- ❑ *Hypothesis #1:* Early in policy conflicts, competing interest groups will engage in “noncontradictory argumentation” where they “talk past” each other
- ❑ *Hypothesis #2:* As time elapses in a policy conflict, competing interest groups will engage their opponent’s frames directly and their discourses will converge
- ❑ *Hypothesis #3:* If an interest group adopts some of the frames and symbols of its opponents, then their opponent is the framing winner

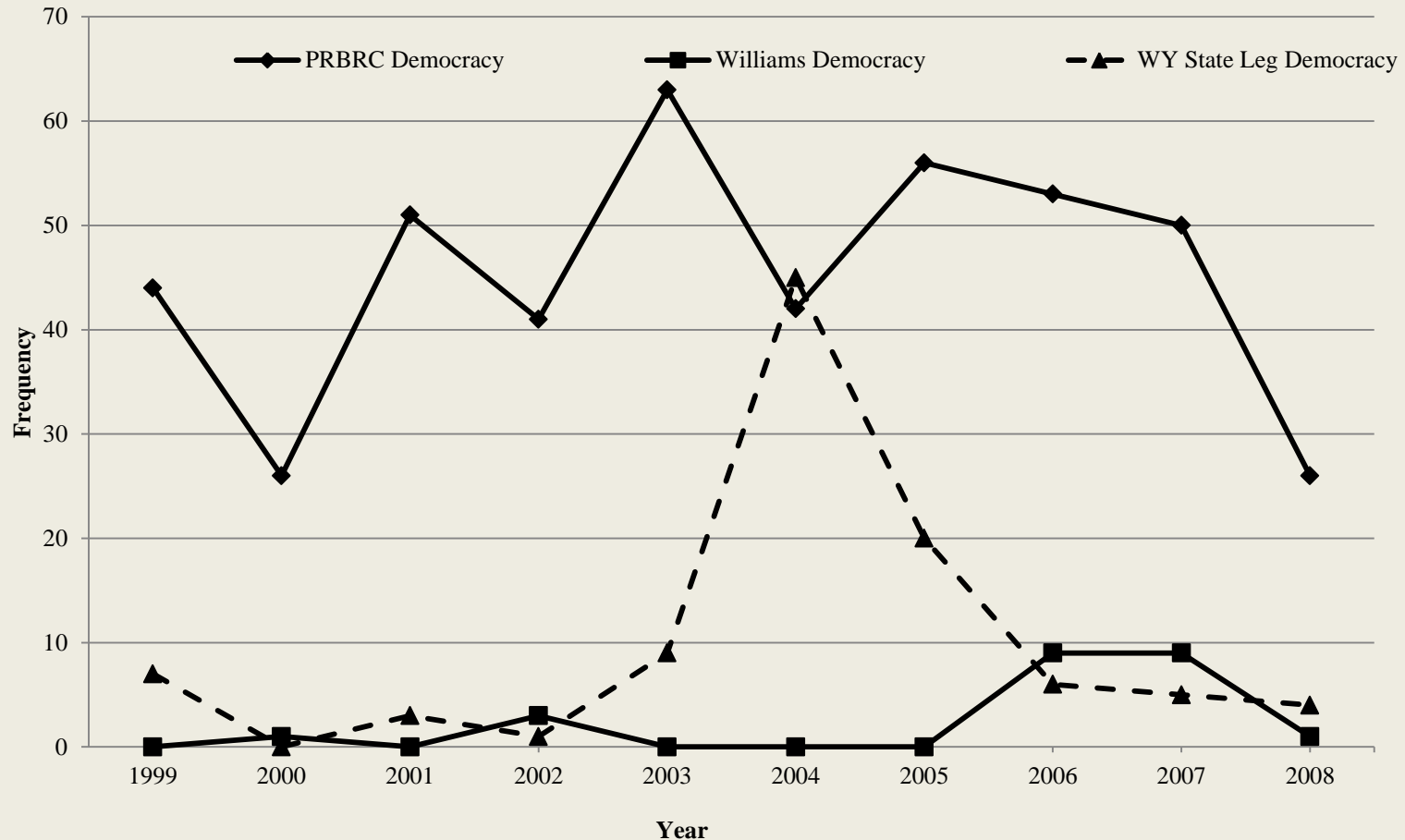
# Hypotheses – State Legislatures

- ❑ *Hypothesis #4:* Policy reframing is uncommon and, when it does occur, it is generally a partial reframe.
- ❑ *Hypothesis #5:* If policy reframing occurs, it occurs over long time periods (i.e. incremental)
- ❑ *Hypothesis #6:* Policy change “is rarely the consequence of the emergence of an entirely new frame” but could result from increased attention to a long time but previously neglected frame

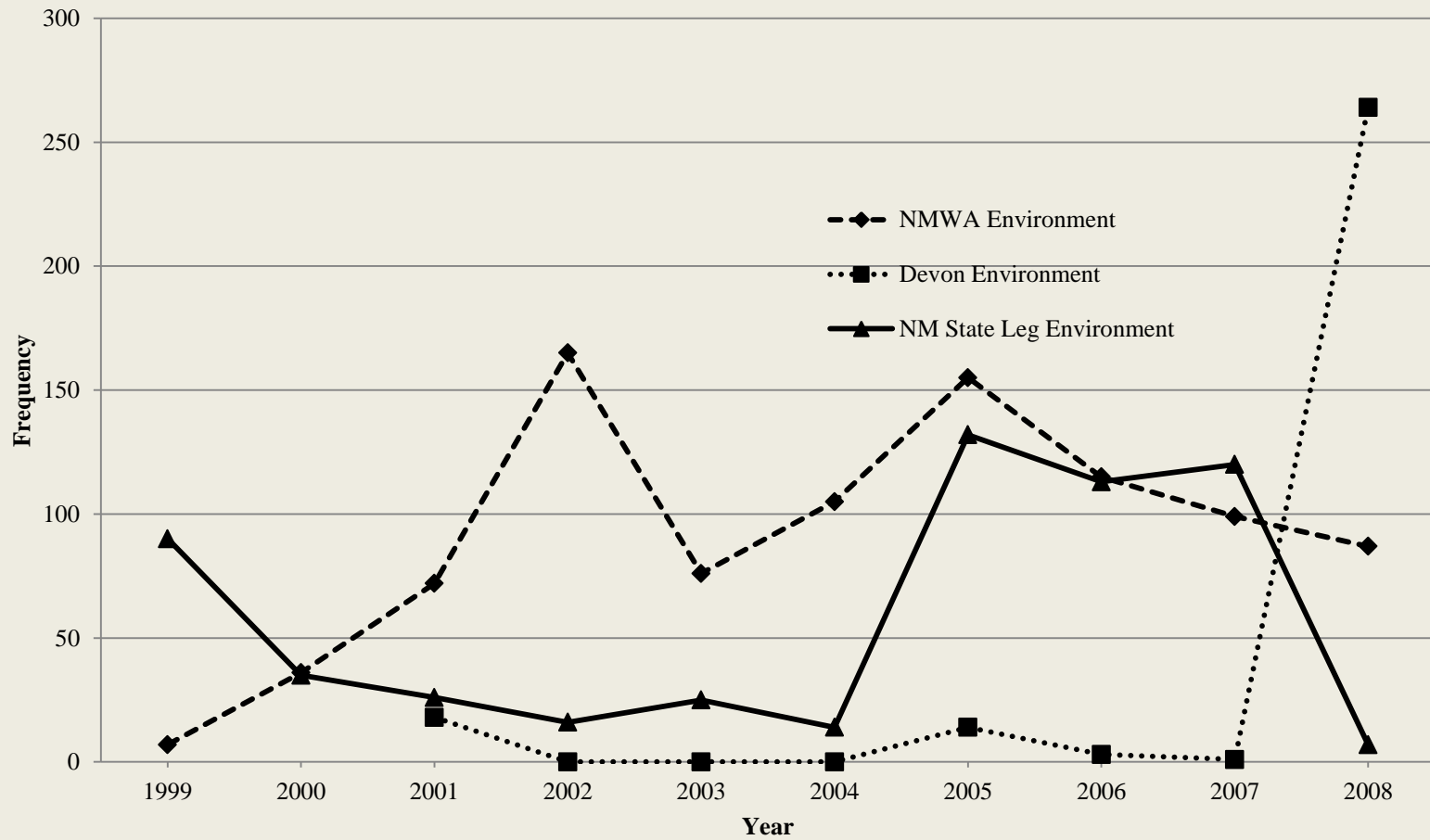
# CO State Legislature, SJCA, and Williams: Environment Frames



# WY State Legislature, PRBRC, and Williams: Democracy Frames



# NM State Legislature, NMWA, and Devon: Environment Frames



# Conclusions

- ❑ Competing Interest Groups generally talk past each other
- ❑ Interest Group framing efforts generally do not converge
  - ❑ Frame convergence is mostly toward the environment not the economy

# Conclusions

- ❑ State legislatures reframe natural gas policy for 42% of the major frames
  - ❑ Partial reframing is the norm
  - ❑ State Legislatures partially reframe for the environment, land-use, and democracy
- ❑ Reframing, when it occurs, happens rather dramatically (4 years)
- ❑ Reframing is driven by long time but neglected status-quo-challenger frames



# Conclusions

- ❑ State legislatures reframe natural gas issues using long-time, but previously marginalized frames
- ❑ State legislatures create unique and quantifiably different frames
- ❑ Reframing is the politics of the marginalized

# Conclusions

- ❑ Mahatma Gandhi: “First they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they fight you, then you win.”

# Conclusions

- ❑ Unconventional coalition success(?)
  - ❑ Time (decades) and Patience
  - ❑ Trust and Communication
  - ❑ Information exchange – Learning
  - ❑ Long-term framing
  - ❑ Diversity of frames – which ones are missing?
  - ❑ Diversity of actors
  - ❑ Political window of opportunity
  - ❑ Strong Leadership

# Break Out Groups

- ❑ Legal, Policy, Legislative
- ❑ Economics
- ❑ Public Health
- ❑ Environment
- ❑ Questions:
  - ❑ What we know
  - ❑ What we don't know
  - ❑ What we need to know to move forward

# State Legislature Environment Frames

