To the Editor:  
 Last week, *The Post* printed a letter to the editor lauding hydraulic fracturing as a step towards energy independence. Mr. Chuck Walter’s assertion that hydraulic fracturing will decrease dependence on oil from the Arab League is severely mistaken.

Oil, of which a great deal is imported, is used for transport. Natural gas is used for other purposes. According to the U. S. Energy Information Administration in 2007, 84% of the United States’ natural gas is produced domestically. Without hydraulic fracturing, the United States is already independent in terms of natural gas. Our dependence lies in our transportation infrastructure, a sector that is not at all affected by natural gas supplies.

It’s also important to note that natural gas and petroleum are incompatible as energy resources. Hydraulic fracturing in Utica shale yields methane, the major component of natural gas. Petroleum is largely a byproduct and, according to industry, does not represent a significant energy resource in shale. According to Dr. Anthony Ingraffea, a petroleum engineer at Cornell University specializing in rock-fracture mechanics, “In the general usage framework, oil and gas are not interchangeable. Petroleum is largely used for transportation; natural gas is largely used for heating and industrial activity. So until you can show me a plan, as part of a national energy plan to transform our entire transportation system in the United States to one that uses natural gas, that argument [that natural gas reduces dependence on foreign energy supplies] is specious.” In other words, natural gas and oil are incompatible, thus hydraulic fracturing will not affect our dependence because we are only dependent on oil supplies.

The author continues by making common claims: that ODNR is an adequate regulator, and that taxation resulting from hydraulic fracturing is a panacea for our area. At the website of the Concerned Citizens of Medina County (fracking.weebly.com), you can see several loopholes in federal regulations that the industry enjoys, as well as the correlation between state politicians’ campaign contributions from fracking interests and the subsequent deregulation of the industry.

In regards to taxation, Ingraffea continues, using information from an industry report by Terry Engelder; with better or equivalent regulations, Pennsylvania has drilled 1,900 or so Marcellus wells with 30 resulting in “serious environmental incidents.” This results in a rate of 1 incident for every 63 wells. Ingraffea concludes that, under the current regulatory scheme at the federal and state levels, governments are held liable for cleanup of many of these incidents. In other words, even though taxes are paid, they are more than offset by expenditures added due to industrial activity. Ingraffea recommends better regulation for hydraulic fracturing in part because current tax revenue is not sufficient for government subsidized cleanup. He offers two choices, either adequate regulations for adequate drilling, or higher taxes to subsidize the cleanup.