

Finding the Right Story to Oppose RGGI

Sometimes, a great story comes your way. A constituent shares a personal experience, or you hear about someone directly affected by a policy. But more often, we struggle to find the right story, even when we know the policy is harmful.

The good news is, as legislators, you hear countless stories every day, the challenge is to remember the ones that can make an impact.



The Noun Exercise: People, Places, & Things

A simple way to uncover stories is through the Noun Exercise from *Stories That Stick* by Kindra Hall. **This exercise helps jog your memory by focusing on key nouns—people, places, and things—connected to an issue.** By listing these elements, you can quickly surface a good story.

1 Identify the People

Start by listing all the people affected by the policy. For the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI), that might include:

- Fracking workers
- Natural gas rig operators
- Small business owners in the energy sector
- Truckers
- Families in the communities where energy jobs have grown

Write down as many as you can, and see if any specific individuals or stories come to mind.

3 Identify the Things

Finally, focus on objects. Think of the small, specific details that can help paint a vivid picture:

- A truck sitting idle, waiting on work that may never come
- A utility bill, showing the rising costs families will pay under RGGI
- A hard hat, representing the construction jobs that are in danger

When you take the time to list these people, places, and things, you'll often find that a story naturally emerges. Usually it's something you've heard, someone you've met, or a specific moment that could illustrate the impact of RGGI.

2 Identify the Places

Next, think about all the places impacted by this policy. Energy policies don't just affect power plants—they affect entire towns and industries. Some examples:

- A diner near a natural gas site, where workers grab breakfast or lunch
- A trucking company office, where drivers plan out deliveries for equipment
- A pipeline construction site, where crews are busy building new infrastructure
- A small town's main street, where local businesses grew because of the energy industry

By zooming in on specific locations, you're often reminded of something you've heard or seen.

Building the Story: A Simple Structure

Once you have your story idea, it's time to shape it into a compelling narrative. *Stories That Stick* suggests a simple structure:

- **Normal Life** – The situation before the disruption
- **Explosion** – A change or challenge appears
- **New Normal** – The outcome or impact

Let's say the Noun Exercise reminds you of a constituent who owns a small trucking company that mostly serves the natural gas industry.

Here's how you could build a story around it:

Normal Life:

The owner is considering buying a second truck, which is a big step to grow his business.

He's built his company from the ground up and finally has cash to expand.

Explosion (The Policy Change):

As he weighs this decision, he sees news about RGGI.

He starts to worry: What will happen to energy jobs? Will drilling slow down? Will my contracts dry up?

Instead of buying the truck and creating another job, he hesitates. The uncertainty is too high.

New Normal:

Instead of expanding, he holds off. No new truck. No new job. The economy treads water, all because the government created uncertainty for the energy industry.

The real impact of RGGI is not in abstract statistics, but in all the decisions not made, businesses not expanded, and jobs never created.

Add the Big Picture

Once you've told the story, connect it back to the larger issue:

- Pennsylvania has already cut emissions—not because of government mandates, but because of the rise of natural gas.
- The shift away from coal has happened naturally—market forces, not RGGI, are responsible for cleaner energy.

End with a Call to Action:

What should Pennsylvania do? Pennsylvania should continue reducing emissions naturally through market-driven innovation, not government mandates. The state should reject RGGI and focus on policies that support clean energy through economic growth, not job-killing regulations. The best way forward is to let Pennsylvania's energy industry keep doing what's already working.

The Bottom Line

A great story makes policy personal. If you're struggling to find that story, start with the Noun Exercise. Focus on people, places, and things, and the right story will emerge to bring your message to life.