

## Heinz Endowments Funds Drilling Foes and Backers

*Associated Press*

June 2, 2013

In the fierce debates over the safety of fracking for natural gas, one group is giving both sides a chance to make their points.

Pittsburgh's Heinz Endowments is funding groups that say fracking can't ever be done safely. It is also working with major energy companies and environmentalists who believe the drilling can be done without hurting the environment or public health.

"The Endowments actually tries to encourage the democratic principle of airing various (and sometimes opposing) points of view on complicated and important issues," Heinz spokesman Doug Root wrote in an email. That includes funding "different approaches to advocacy on environmental issues" because at any point in time one approach may be more effective than another.

Heinz doesn't have a problem with the diverse views, but over the past two months dozens of environmental groups have criticized a new initiative the Endowments helped found—the Pittsburgh-based Center for Sustainable Shale Development. That's a partnership between energy companies, including Shell and Chevron, and national and regional environmental groups. In announcing the effort, Heinz Endowments president Robert Vagt said he believes fracking "can be done in a way that does not do violence to the environment."

... One expert on foundations said the Heinz approach is somewhat unusual.

"It's not unheard of, but it is more common for a foundation to come down clearly on one side," said Aaron Dorfman, the executive director of the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy, a research and advocacy organization based in Washington, D.C.

Dorfman said that the Heinz Endowments approach of "funding multiple paths" is just its way of trying to find "a sustainable way to deal with a challenging issue."

But he wondered about the future.

"Are they going to continue to fund groups that are opposed to fracking?" Dorfman asked.

[Read the full article](#) .

---

This article also appeared in the [Denver Sun](#) , [The Charleston Gazette](#) and [more](#) .