

Oral History Collection

Tara Linn Hunter

Interviewer: Zak Fields

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Place of Interview: Denton, Texas

Ms. Hunter: Hi. My name is Tara Linn Hunter. I was the volunteer coordinator for the Frack Free Denton campaign. I'm currently the acting vice president of the Denton Drilling Awareness Group. And what that involves is mapping out the whole city of Denton, and breaking it down into walkable sections for our volunteers. With a troop of about 50 volunteers, at an average age of about 50, we were able to cover 95% of the homes in Denton with either a fact to face conversation or a piece of information or literature. I learned what the ALEC convention is. It's the American Legislative Exchange Council. It's a group of global corporate lobbyists who basically wine and dine our state

representatives in these kind of closed doors conventions. They have them at Vegas and other places, often guarded by armed guards, which is interesting, and no media is really allowed in. And what happens there is that these corporations will basically present mock bills, so model bills. They will lobby our state reps. Our state reps will go back to their states and present these bills as if they just came up with this [laughs]. And that's what HB40 was. It was one of these ALEC model bills that was basically written by a corporation. It is interesting what HB40 did, because it brought the conversation to a state level, rather than just an issue about Denton. I think what people don't necessarily realize is that HB40 affected over 300 local ordinances across Texas. So it wasn't just about Denton's ban anymore, it was about local communities' rights to determine their own quality of life. They said that the Texas Railroad Commission, George P. Bush, he was working with the Land Commission at the time, he said that he didn't want a patchwork quilt of regulations across the state, that we should just give all the power to the Railroad

Commission [Texas state regulatory body over oil and gas production], essentially. That has basically become the city council of Denton, in our area of Texas, the city council of Texas that replaced it. What we thought is that local communities know best about their neighborhood layouts, their local zoning laws, their health and safety concerns. You can't possibly, just the logistics of one organization at the state level, dealing with every individual city's fracking regulations is... sounds like a bureaucratic nightmare. [Break].

Hunter: There's this idea of accountability. So we see each other. I see my city councilmen down the street, and I see them at the grocery store, and we see each other at city council meetings. We pass each other in daily life. And there's the sense of ownership and accountability when it's on a local level. But when you don't know a piece of land, you don't know the people, but you have power over them, that is ripe for waste, it's ripe, it's a ripe situation for abuse, and I think you don't have the capacity to care for that much space, and that many people. Right? As human

beings, we really only have the capacity to really care for a small area of land and maybe 50 people in our lives, you know, max, before we kind of lose that capacity for personal accountability.

Fields: It was interesting you brought up the fact that HB40 affects a lot of cities and ordinances, and not just Denton's. Do you think that that will get other cities to maybe join up with Denton and try to fight this?

Hunter: Yes, we are already seeing that because what this campaign did was it allowed us to connect with other people in Irving, Mansfield, Fort Worth. We were organizing trips with those folks to go talk to the state level, all during that spring when HB40 was passing. So we all connected. And I think now we are forming the Texas Grassroots Network. I think that, from that, some good things will happen, where we can support each other in our local efforts, a little bit better than we might, could have before. Right now I believe that they are working on the language for a resolution to restore local controls to communities, but also to refocus on what we cared about to begin with, which was the health and safety of our

neighborhoods, and our families, and friends. So,
letting people determine that for themselves.

Fields: Well, um I want to thank you for giving me your
time.

Hunter: Yeah, thank you. Absolutely. Thanks for your
interest.

[End of interview]