

## Family wins fracking suit in legal blow to industry



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By Lauren McCauley, [Common Dreams](#)

In what is being called a legal blow to the fracking industry, on Tuesday a Texas family was awarded \$3 million in the first ever verdict to be handed down over the negative health impacts of fracking.

Bob and Lisa Parr of Wise County sued Aruba Petroleum in 2011 for shale gas drilling operations which their lawyers [said](#) "fouled the family's 40-acre ranch property, their home and quality of life," by sickening both them and their daughter Emma, as well as their pets and livestock.

"They're vindicated," said Attorney David Matthews following the news of the verdict. "I'm really proud of the family that went through what they went through and said, 'I'm not going to take it anymore.' It takes guts to say, 'I'm going to stand here and protect my family from an invasion of our right to enjoy our property.'"

Though not the first suit filed against an energy company for damages related to fracking, the vast majority of those ended in settlements with plaintiffs [bound](#) to restrictive gag orders.

The companies have had "an effective campaign of secrecy that protected them," according to Earthjustice managing attorney Deborah Goldberg. As Goldberg [explained](#) to ThinkProgress, in addition to the gag orders, the industry has historically dodged blame by claiming proprietary rights on the details of their operations.

"A lot of the earlier tort cases [against fracking companies] were dismissed because the industry was so successful at withholding information that people couldn't draw connections between the problems and what industry were doing," Goldberg added. "Now studies are starting to be done, and people are beginning to realize that they can document what the impacts are going to be."

Last week, three separate studies were [released](#) documenting the toxic impact of fracking operations. Research conducted by the [Physicians Scientists & Engineers for Healthy Energy](#) found that fracking likely produces public health risks and "elevated levels of toxic compounds in the environment" in nearly all stages of the process.

Months after fracking operations began in 2008, the Parrs began to experience negative health effects, including breathing difficulties, nausea, rashes and nosebleeds. Doctors confirmed the existence of hydrocarbon-related chemicals in Lisa's bloodstream and their young daughter was diagnosed with asthma.

Further, as ThinkProgress reports, the Parrs experienced the death of house pets and livestock, and saw "physical dwarfing" of a newborn calf.

The \$3 million verdict was only about 4.5 percent of the \$66 million the Parrs had sought in their latest complaint, [according](#) to the details of the suit. The jury rejected the family's claim that Aruba acted with malice. [Reportedly](#), Aruba plans to appeal the verdict.

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