

Subcommittee on Energy, Climate, and Grid Security Field Hearing
Testimony by Dr. Betty Reynard, President,
Lamar State College Port Arthur
April 8, 2024

Welcome

Good afternoon and welcome to Port Arthur and the campus of Lamar State College Port Arthur (LSCPA). As the president of the college, I think I speak for everybody in this room when I say that we appreciate your interest as well as your willingness to visit Southeast Texas to learn more about our region.

My goal today is to paint a picture of Lamar State College Port Arthur and acknowledge the impact of the January 26, 2024 announcement on the ‘pause’ of LNG exports on the college.

Port Arthur

Lamar State College Port Arthur (LSCPA) is situated in one of the most urban and economically disadvantaged communities in Texas. The per capita income is \$24,065 and 27.6% of Port Arthur residents live below the poverty level.¹

The educational attainment of Port Arthur residents also falls far behind national trends. Only 11.4% of residents, for example, have a bachelor’s degree or higher while the national average is 34.3%.²

Lamar State College Port Arthur

Time and again we have seen that one of the solutions to lift individuals out of poverty is through education. The college offers thirty associate degrees, twenty-three certificate programs, and two advanced certificates. Considering the industry in the area, it is no surprise that several of the largest educational programs are related to the manufacturing industry.

The campus has a diverse ethnic student population resulting The Department of Education classifying LSCPA as a *Hispanic Serving Institution*. The unduplicated student headcount for the Fall 2023 Semester was 3,982.

¹ US Bureau of Labor Statistics

² US Bureau of Labor Statistics

Lamar State College Port Arthur Students

Because of its open-door policy and the composition of the region surrounding the college, LSCPA enrolls large numbers of educationally and economically disadvantaged students. Student profiles generally include descriptions such as socioeconomically disadvantaged, academically underprepared, first generation student, and member of an at-risk ethnic group. The campus also has concerns that too many of our students experience homelessness, food insecurity, and general economic challenges. I frequently describe those challenges by reminding the public that LSCPA students are 'one flat tire' away from 'dropping out' or 'stopping out' of college.

Support for LSCPA students is, therefore, absolutely vital for their success.

LNG Industry Description

Historically, Port Arthur is well known as one of the largest petrochemical hubs. Over time, Port Arthur has also become a premier location for LNG industries due to its strategic location along the Gulf Coast.

The impact of the LNG industry cannot be understated. The construction of the PA LNG plant has 9,000 workers while the Golden Pass LNG plant has 2,500 workers on site. The new construction and the expansion on those sites contribute to the local and national economy by creating new jobs and generating revenue through employment opportunities, tax revenues, and investments in infrastructure.

LNG Industry Support of LSCPA

The LNG industries in the region also routinely support Lamar State College Port Arthur. Each LNG plant in the region, for example, funds scholarships. Chenier LNG and Port Arthur LNG recently donated funds to support an EDA Grant application by the college.

Today the LNG plants in Port Arthur are under construction to build a new plant or expand an existing plant so they do not, at this time, have interns from LSCPA. However, LSCPA does have interns at some petrochemical plants in Port Arthur. Manufacturing interns, on average, earn about \$16 per hr. It is, therefore, not unrealistic to suggest that future LNG internships will result in full-time positions that pay from \$64,250 to \$109,540³.

³ Career One Stop, U.S. Department of Labor.

Contractors building the Port Arthur LNG Plant have also engaged LSCPA to provide craft training. That training not only trains local residents for employment in the industry but it also provides income to the college.

Overall, the LNG industries in the region have dedicated hundreds of thousands of dollars to provide scholarships, equipment, internships, grant support, and training programs.

Impact of LNG Industry Support

The LNG industry donations enhance educational opportunities and strengthen partnerships between academia and industry to benefit students, faculty, and the broader community.

Absent scholarships, students are forced to reduce the number of classes they register for or delay their education altogether.

Absent scholarships the college would reduce the number of classes scheduled. If continued, programs may close due to low enrollment.

Absent training equipment, students would not experience or learn about the 'real world' worksite provided by donated equipment that meets industry standards. The quality of training and the subsequent workforce would decline.

Absent LNG plants that are operational, internship and apprenticeship opportunities for students would surely disappear.

Generally speaking, the impacts of reduced industry support would contribute to the low educational attainment and existing poverty in Port Arthur.

Closing

In closing, it is my hope that the information I have shared with you today will assist in making decisions regarding the 'pause' in LNG exports.

Again, I want to thank you for organizing this field hearing. And, I will be happy to answer any questions.