

Fact-Check: Jim Mazzei Interview on the Inola Smelter

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About this fact-check

Jim Mazzei's claims hold up on a few basics (1,000 permanent jobs, EGA's 10th-generation technology, the Wallace Design debate retraction) **but are wrong or unsupported on most technical, environmental and financial points**. Common errors: calling smelting a bauxite process, overstating emission cuts, claiming Norway, Iceland and Dubai prove no harm, and crediting the smelter for infrastructure funded by earlier grants.

The interview was posted on YouTube. Jim Mazzei speaks about his son Mike Mazzei, the 2026 Republican nominee for Oklahoma governor. Another son, Dan Mazzei, is discussed in the final section. Relevant discussion about the smelter begins around the 21-minute mark.

Verdict scale: Correct · Mostly correct · Partly correct · Misleading · Incorrect · Unverifiable · Opinion. Each row cites the pages the finding rests on; information is current as of the date above.

1. Smelter process and jobs

The 1,000 plant jobs figure is correct; the process description and the 7,000–8,000 supporting jobs are not.

Claim	Verdict	What the record shows	Sources
A smelter takes bauxite and refines it	Incorrect	Bauxite is refined into alumina at a separate refinery (Bayer process); the smelter turns alumina into metal (Hall–Héroult). Inola would receive alumina by barge or rail.	Aluminum Association , Wikipedia , Frontier Map
The final product is rolls of aluminum	Incorrect	The plant would cast billets, sheet ingots, foundry alloys and high-purity aluminum. Sheet ingots go to separate rolling mills.	Southwest Ledger , Tulsa World
The plant will hire 1,000 people	Correct	1,000 permanent direct jobs, plus 4,000+	Oklahoma Commerce

Claim	Verdict	What the record shows	Sources
		temporary construction jobs.	
7,000–8,000 more jobs support the plant	Mostly incorrect	Estimates of supporting jobs range from 1,800 (state, May 2025) to about 3,000 in Oklahoma (company's latest multiplier: 3 per direct job). Only the company's high-end 9,000 "secondary jobs" fits the range. Its 7,000 figure is total average Oklahoma jobs, not jobs on top of the 1,000.	Oklahoma Policy Institute , The Frontier , KTUL
An incredible economic incentive	Opinion	The company projects \$49 billion cumulative impact through 2060. Public support: up to \$500 million federal and \$255 million state.	KTUL , Oklahoma Policy Institute

2. Local opposition, site ownership and growth

The site is an industrial park, as claimed, but it isn't owned by the Port of Catoosa, and the Ingersolls' stated concern is pollution, not newcomers.

Claim	Verdict	What the record shows	Sources
The environmental issue is a really big issue	Correct	Hydrogen fluoride harm to hay and cattle is the central concern; the first permit application sought up to 425 tons a year.	Bloomberg via MINING.COM
The Ingersolls own very large tracts of land	Correct	Joleta Ingersoll co-owns a 12,000-acre ranch a few miles outside Inola.	Bloomberg via MINING.COM

Claim	Verdict	What the record shows	Sources
They don't want another factory or people coming in	Incorrect	Ingersoll's public objection is that hydrogen fluoride would poison her hay and cattle.	Bloomberg via MINING.COM , Tulsa World , Wikipedia
The site is owned by the Port of Catoosa	Partly correct	The City of Tulsa—Rogers County Port Authority (Tulsa Ports) owns both the Port of Catoosa and the Port of Inola. PSO transferred the Inola land to it in 2019.	Tulsa Ports circular , Tulsa Ports , KGOU
1,000 to 4,000 people coming in	Correct range	1,000 permanent and 4,000 construction jobs; construction jobs last about three years. No estimate exists of how many would move to Inola.	Fox23 , KTUL
It will change Inola substantially and make it better	Opinion	Inola has about 1,890 residents. The company projects about \$100,000 average pay. Residents vote on a smelting ban in April 2027.	Bloomberg via MINING.COM , North Atlanta Star , Oklahoma Voice

3. Older plants, Drummond and "not that kind of plant"

Mike Mazzei did reverse his position as Drummond said, but there's no evidence Drummond ever supported the plant, and the new plant's lower emissions remain unproven.

Claim	Verdict	What the record shows	Sources
Critics point to "third-generation" U.S. plants built 50–55 years ago	Mostly correct	Kentucky's Sebree smelter began in 1973 and Hawesville was built in 1969; an Inola rancher had samples tested near a Kentucky plant. "Third	Century Aluminum , Sierra Club , KTUL

Claim	Verdict	What the record shows	Sources
		generation" isn't a verifiable industry term.	
Drummond accused Mike of flip-flopping	Correct	Mike opposed the project's incentives in early March, then announced strong support hours before Trump's May 29 endorsement. He says new research changed his mind.	Oklahoma Watch , News On 6
Drummond turned against the plant because of Mike's reversal	Misleading	News On 6 describes Drummond's opposition as consistent. He sued June 2, days after the endorsement, but says the company's application was completed around May 19.	News On 6 , Oklahoma Watch
Drummond said it's going to kill people and cattle	Exaggerated	Drummond called smelting "extremely hazardous" and warned of harm to hay and cattle. No public statement found saying it would kill people. The Frontier rated his cattle-fluorosis claim "mostly true."	News On 6 , The Frontier
This plant is not that kind of plant	Partly supported	Same basic chemistry, but newer EX technology and a proposed limit of 0.64 lb fluoride per ton, lowest for a U.S. plant. Real-world emissions aren't proven, and the	Oklahoma Commerce , The Frontier

Claim	Verdict	What the record shows	Sources
		permit is still under review.	

4. Refining vs. smelting

Alumina refining won't happen in Oklahoma, as claimed, but smelting is still smelting and has its own pollution, and the plant won't roll sheets.

Claim	Verdict	What the record shows	Sources
Converting bauxite to alumina is a dirty process	Correct	Refining creates 1 to 2.5 tons of caustic "red mud" per ton of alumina, with a pH usually above 11.	Light Metal Age , ScienceDirect
The plant doesn't take bauxite; refining never happens in Oklahoma	Correct	Refining won't take place in Inola; alumina, coke and other materials would arrive by barge.	KGOU , Century RFP
Alumina arrives as granules or crystals	Essentially correct	Alumina is a fine white powder.	EBSCO
Alumina is heated and electrolysis is used	Correct	Alumina is dissolved in molten cryolite and electrolyzed (Hall–Héroult).	Britannica
It's not smelting in the classical sense; the dirty part is already done	Incorrect	Smelting alumina this way is the standard definition of primary aluminum smelting. Smelting has its own pollution: fluoride, an on-site anode plant, spent potliner, perfluorocarbons.	Aluminum Association , Wikipedia , Sooner Sentinel , Sierra Club
Alumina is melted, dries in a channel, is rolled into sheets	Incorrect	Aluminum is cast in a casthouse into billets, sheet ingots and other shapes; it is not rolled into sheets.	Frontier Map , Southwest Ledger , Oklahoma Commerce

5. Claremore defense companies and aluminum costs

Local manufacturers may gain a steadier supply, but buyers wouldn't escape the tariff's effect on price, and nothing shows costs would fall drastically.

Claim	Verdict	What the record shows	Sources
Two defense companies are in Claremore	Plausible, unconfirmed	Pryer Aerospace in Claremore serves U.S. defense contractors; a second company couldn't be identified.	Oklahoma Commerce
Their workers say the plant is wonderful for them	Unverifiable	Secondhand; no public statement from a Claremore company. Defense group FISTA and the Justice Department have backed the plant publicly.	Southwest Ledger , U.S. DOJ
They won't have to pay tariffs	Misleading	U.S. aluminum prices (the Midwest Premium) include the 50% tariff even for domestic metal; Century says the higher premium has boosted its finances.	Packaging Dive , Century 10-Q , Goodin
They won't pay big transportation costs	Plausible, unquantified	No public estimate. Defense makers buy fabricated aluminum, which needs processing after the smelter.	Oklahoma Commerce
Their aluminum cost will drop drastically	Unsupported	Aluminum sells at market prices; no source projects local discounts. The project's own finances don't assume tariffs last.	Bloomberg via MINING.COM
Defense plant jobs will be incredibly important	Opinion	Aerospace and defense account for more than 206,000 Oklahoma jobs; no estimate exists	Oklahoma Energy Today

Claim	Verdict	What the record shows	Sources
		for new defense jobs from the smelter.	

6. The cattle photos and the five-mile claim

The lawsuit did use photos of Indian cattle, but the plant would be a major polluter, and the lawsuit never claimed a five-mile zone of destruction.

Claim	Verdict	What the record shows	Sources
It's not dirty	Incorrect	The revised application caps fluoride at 264 tons a year; 10 tons makes a plant a "major source." The first application also listed 731 tons of particulate matter and 187 tons of toxic air pollutants.	The Frontier, Oklahoma Policy Institute
The lawsuit showed pictures of cows with fluorosis from India	Correct	Drummond's lawsuit used photos from a 2023 study of livestock in India. It also relied on an expert declaration.	The Frontier, Oklahoma Policy Institute
The nearest plant to those cows was as far as the East Coast	Unverifiable, likely misleading	The study doesn't say where the photos were taken or their cause. Groundwater causes most fluorosis in Indian livestock, but India has documented cattle fluorosis near aluminum smelters in Odisha.	Choubisa 2023
The lawsuit said everything within five miles would be destroyed	Not supported	The attorney general said the plant is about three miles from schools, homes and farms and that emissions could drift. The five-mile claim	Oklahoma AG, Southwest Ledger

Claim	Verdict	What the record shows	Sources
		came from a resident citing a 1979 study at a public meeting.	

7. "10th-generation" plants and the EPA limit

Inola's proposed fluoride limit is 37–47% below the federal benchmarks, not 60%, and no full-scale 10th-generation plant exists yet.

Claim	Verdict	What the record shows	Sources
Older U.S. plants were built 50–60 years ago	Correct	Sebree dates to 1973 and Hawesville to 1969.	Century Aluminum , Sierra Club
Plants being built now are 10th generation	Partly correct	EGA calls its EX technology 10th-generation, but it runs only as a 10-cell pilot in Abu Dhabi. Inola would be its first full-scale use.	Gulf News , Light Metal Age
One is in the middle of Dubai, a major tourist city	Mostly incorrect	The EX pilot is at Al Taweelah, in an industrial zone between Abu Dhabi and Dubai. EGA's Dubai smelter, near Jebel Ali Port, dates to 1979.	EGA – Al Taweelah , EGA – Jebel Ali
The plant manager lives two miles away	Unverifiable	No public information.	—
10th-generation plants are in Norway and Iceland	Misleading	Those plants, such as Alcoa Mosjøen and Rio Tinto Iceland, are regulator-picked benchmarks, not EGA designs, and are much smaller than Inola.	The Frontier
Designed to emit 60% less than the EPA fluoride limit	Incorrect	The proposed 0.64 lb/ton is about 47% below the federal limit	eCFR 40 CFR 63.844 , News On 6 , FOX23

Claim	Verdict	What the record shows	Sources
		for new potlines (1.2 lb/ton) and 37% below the company's original 1.02 lb/ton. It's a permit cap, not a design level, and DEQ sets the final limit. "Fluorocarbon" is the wrong term; the limit covers fluorides.	

8. Harm, federal monitoring and enforcement

Fluoride harm to cattle and hay is well documented, the design is unproven at scale, and permit violations bring enforcement, not automatic shutdown.

Claim	Verdict	What the record shows	Sources
Harm to people, cattle or hay is preposterous	Incorrect	Smelter fluoride has harmed cattle near older plants. The company acknowledges fluoride will settle on soil and vegetation and is still modeling safety.	The Frontier , OPA Answers Center , News On 6
The design has been proven in multiple places	Incorrect	EX exists only as a pilot at Al Taweelah.	Light Metal Age , Utilities ME
Mike wants third-party monitoring	Partly verified	Mike has pledged to work with independent inspectors.	News On 6
A no-bid DHS monitoring contract	Legally possible, unusual	Tribally owned 8(a) firms can get sole-source contracts; civilian agencies need approval above \$25 million. DHS doesn't do environmental monitoring; EPA and DEQ regulate	eCFR 13 CFR 124.506 , Unanet

Claim	Verdict	What the record shows	Sources
		emissions. No proposal found.	
Exceed "chloride" limits and EPA law won't let it operate	Incorrect	The limit is for fluorides. Violations bring fines or fixes, not automatic closure: Hawesville violated its limits at least a dozen times and kept running.	eCFR 40 CFR 63.844 , Sierra Club

9. Local jobs and the "no harm" examples

Norway and Iceland show documented fluoride effects near smelters, not a record of no harm; the job and income claims rest on the company's projections.

Claim	Verdict	What the record shows	Sources
A marvelous generator of income	Partly supported	The company's study projects \$49 billion through 2060 and about \$100,000 average pay. It isn't independent.	News 9 , North Atlanta Star
Norway shows no harm	Incorrect	Peer-reviewed research documented fluoride exposure and dental fluorosis in deer near Norwegian smelters.	ResearchGate , Anatomical Record
Iceland shows no harm	Incorrect	At Alcoa's Fjarðaál, 2012 emissions exceeded safe limits and farmers were warned about hay; grass fluoride topped recommended limits. Century disputes farmer claims of harm at Grundartangi.	Reykjavík Grapevine , Al Jazeera

Claim	Verdict	What the record shows	Sources
Dubai shows no harm	Unverifiable	No published studies found either way.	—

10. Inola's wastewater system

The shared treatment plant is a Tulsa Ports project funded by grants before the smelter was announced, not the smelter's system.

Claim	Verdict	What the record shows	Sources
Inola's wastewater system was terrible and antiquated	Largely correct	Inola uses an aerated lagoon and has operated under DEQ consent orders since 2016 and 2018.	Tulsa Beacon , FOX23 , KOSU
Inola arranged with Century's company to use the plant's treatment system	Incorrect	Tulsa Ports began planning a shared town–port plant in 2021, backed by a \$22.3 million federal grant (2022), \$14 million in state pandemic funds and tribal grants. The smelter was announced in May 2025.	Army Corps EA , Wikipedia , Oklahoma OMES , KTUL
Inola avoided a bond and higher property taxes	Partly supported, misattributed	Grants covered much of the cost; the state water board estimated \$21.2 million in financing savings. The savings came from grants, not the smelter.	Tulsa Beacon , Oklahoma Business Voice
Inola will use it free of charge	Unverifiable	No published terms found.	—
The benefit got smothered by propaganda	Opinion	The project was covered at Tulsa Ports' 2026 State of the Ports event.	KTUL

11. Bauxite, refineries and iron ore

Jamaica is a real bauxite and alumina source tied to the project, but Arkansas has no refinery and U.S. iron ore comes from the upper Midwest, not New York.

Claim	Verdict	What the record shows	Sources
Bauxite is mined in Arkansas, Georgia and Alabama	Misleading	Those states have small deposits, but the only U.S. refinery used imported bauxite in 2025.	Aluminum Association , USGS 2026
Bauxite is mined in Jamaica	Correct	Century owns 55% of Jamalco, a Jamaican bauxite mine and alumina refinery.	Century Aluminum
There's a large alumina refinery in Arkansas	Incorrect	The only operating U.S. refinery is in Gramercy, Louisiana. Burnside, Louisiana has been shut since 2020.	USGS 2026 , USGS 2022
There's a large refinery in Jamaica	Correct	Jamalco refines about 1.4 million metric tons of alumina a year. Inola's alumina source hasn't been confirmed; a project representative described refining near New Orleans.	Century Aluminum , Fabbaloo
It's like a steel plant but doesn't start from ore	Correct	Inola would process alumina, not bauxite.	KGOU
Steel plants get iron ore from New York	Incorrect	Michigan, Minnesota and Utah ship 98% of U.S. usable iron ore.	USGS 2026

12. Mike's role and where the incentives go

Most state and federal incentives go to the smelter company, not to Inola, and river deepening is a separate Army Corps project.

Claim	Verdict	What the record shows	Sources
Mike had nothing to do with approval	Correct, with caveat	The Legislature passed the incentives (HB 2781) in 2025, when Mike held no office. The plant isn't fully approved: the permit is under review, and a moratorium and referendum are pending.	Bond Buyer , KTUL
As governor, Mike would only ensure monitoring	Understated	The governor appoints the Environmental Quality Board, which oversees DEQ and appoints its director. The state is also in the power-supply talks and oversees 15-year performance-based incentive payments.	Oklahoma DEQ , Yahoo Finance , Area Development
Mike first objected to incentives for a foreign nation	Correct	In early March he opposed tax incentives for foreign-owned companies.	News On 6
The incentives go to Inola infrastructure and river deepening, not a foreign nation	Mostly incorrect	The MOU outlined \$275 million in state money plus \$735 million in tax exemptions for the company, which is 60% owned by UAE sovereign funds. The \$500 million DOE grant went to Century. Separate grants fund port, wastewater and substation work.	Bond Buyer , Energy News Beat , The Frontier , KTUL , Army Corps

Claim	Verdict	What the record shows	Sources
		Channel deepening is an Army Corps project.	

13. Who decides the plant's fate

Inola voters decide on a ban in April 2027; a federal override is legally possible but hasn't happened, and no Poteau relocation effort was found.

Claim	Verdict	What the record shows	Sources
It may be up to Inolans	Correct	The moratorium runs through April 7, 2027, when voters decide on a town-wide smelting ban. The company and Tulsa Ports are challenging the measure.	KTUL , FOX23
The feds may take it over	Possible, not taken	A March 2026 Justice Department opinion says Defense Production Act orders can preempt state law. Federal involvement so far is a statement of support; the AG's case was sent back to state court.	U.S. DOJ OLC , U.S. DOJ , Oklahoma Voice
Poteau wants it moved there	Unverifiable	No public reporting found.	—
Mike will ensure supplementary monitoring	Campaign pledge	Mike has promised independent inspectors. Enforcement rests with the DEQ-administered permit. He faces Democrat Cyndi Munson on Nov. 3.	News On 6 , FOX23

Claim	Verdict	What the record shows	Sources
An economic juggernaut without environmental harm	Opinion	Economic figures are the company's projections; safety isn't yet demonstrated.	—

14. Mike's position and Drummond's motives

The record shows Mike Mazzei changed his position just before a major political benefit, and his own words treat the risks as real rather than as propaganda.

Claim	Verdict	What the record shows	Sources
Mike doesn't really have anything to do with it	Partly correct	He holds no office over the project, but he's now the GOP nominee for governor and won with Trump's backing tied to the smelter.	Wikipedia , KGOU
He simply looked at it and saw it's good for Oklahoma	Incomplete	He reversed from opposition to support hours before Trump's endorsement; he credits new research on jobs and security.	Oklahoma Watch , Radio Oklahoma News
He won't change his tune for political advantage	Contradicted by the record	The reversal coincided with the endorsement. Whether it caused the change can't be proven; Drummond says yes, Mike says no.	Radio Oklahoma News
He believes the dangers are just propaganda	Inconsistent with his statements	Mike has promised to make the plant "100% safe" and to use independent inspectors.	The Frontier , News On 6
He could win 5,000–50,000 more votes by opposing it	Speculation	Mike won the runoff 50.3% to 49.7%, about 2,000 votes out of 371,309.	Washington Examiner , Octagon AI

Claim	Verdict	What the record shows	Sources
Drummond was posturing	Opinion, disputed	Stitt and Munson accused Drummond of politics, but his opposition has been consistent and his lawsuit continues after the runoff.	Oklahoma Voice , News On 6 , Oklahoma Voice
Mike won't lie to get elected	Opinion	Not verifiable. The Frontier rated his 10,000-jobs claim "mixed."	The Frontier

15. The debate question about Dan Mazzei

Jim Mazzei is right on the core point: Dan Mazzei's firm has no smelter contract, and News 9 later corrected its debate question.

Claim	Verdict	What the record shows	Sources
The debate opened with a claim that Dan worked for a firm getting a contract	Essentially correct	The moderator said Dan worked for "the company chosen to design the smelter" and asked if Mike had a personal stake.	News On 6 , News 9
Dan is a part owner of Wallace Engineering	Essentially correct	Dan is a senior leader and licensed structural engineer at Wallace Design Collective; Mike calls him a co-owner.	News 9 , City News OKC
Wallace has no smelter contract of any kind	Correct	The smelter's project lead confirmed no discussions or contracts; News 9 issued a clarification. Wallace's March contract with Inola is for a Sofidel expansion.	Oklahoma Watch , News 9 , KGOU

Claim	Verdict	What the record shows	Sources
Drummond's people gave moderators a bold-faced lie	False claim; source and intent unverified	A pre-debate post from an account called Oklahoma First pushed the claim; no link to Drummond was found. The real Sofidel contract suggests a misreading.	Oklahoma Gazette
Drummond repeated it minutes later; it was orchestrated	Repetition correct; coordination unverifiable	Oklahoma Watch confirmed Drummond repeated the claim later in the debate. No evidence of coordination with moderators.	Oklahoma Watch
The conflict-of-interest claim is baloney	Supported	No evidence Mike or Dan stands to profit, and News 9 corrected its premise.	News 9