



Monroe County Legislature

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ASSISTANT DEMOCRATIC LEADER

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Not to be removed from the Office of the Legislature of Monroe County
Committee Assignment
Memorializing Referral -L

February 13, 2012

To the Honorable
Monroe County Legislature
407 County Office Building
39 West Main Street
Rochester, New York 14614

Re: Memorializing the New York State Legislature to Pass and Governor Cuomo to Sign Into Law A8557 and S5830, an Act to Amend the Environmental Conservation Law, in Relation to Allowing Local Governments to Enact or Enforce Certain Laws and Ordinances Governing Oil, Gas and Solution Mining; and to Repeal Certain Provisions of Such Law Relating Thereto

Honorable Legislators:

Given the current national efforts to decrease American dependence on foreign oil, the process of hydraulic fracturing to extract natural gas from shale deposits has become a highly-contested issue. According to the New York Times, there are now more than 493,000 active natural-gas wells in the United States, 90% of which have utilized the process of hydraulic fracturing, also known as "hydro-fracking." In states like Colorado and Pennsylvania, the hydro-fracking method has been used widely and has been linked with destruction of natural habitats, contamination of drinking water, and a rise in health concerns in nearby populations.

Hydraulic fracturing is the practice of drilling wells into shale deposits deep underground and blasting apart fissures in the shale using a corrosive solution. This solution involves millions of gallons of water, chemicals and toxins such as benzene and 2-Butoxyethanol, metal proppants, and sand. Hydro-fracking wastewater, which contains dangerous levels of radium and other radioactive materials absorbed from the shale, is stored in ponds prone to spills or is shipped off to wastewater treatment plants. Unfortunately, most treatment centers are unaware of the exact toxins and radioactive elements in the water and are usually unequipped to sufficiently treat the hazardous liquid. Wastewater is then released into rivers and lakes across the nation, contaminating clean drinking water supplies and endangering the health of Americans.

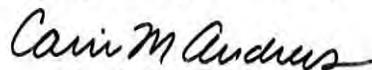
This is a concern very close to home as New York State sits atop a large part of the Marcellus Shale formation and the Utica Shale formation- drilling targets for energy companies

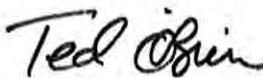
heading the current natural-gas boom. ProPublica reported that in 2008 there were 13,684 natural-gas wells in New York State with close to 500 new wells being drilled every year. Wastewater from hydro-fracking sites is also sent to at least two treatment plants in New York State- one plant that discharges into Southern Cayuga Lake, near Ithaca, and another that discharges into Owasco Outlet, near Auburn. A recent scientific study released by Duke University found dangerous levels of methane in drinking water retrieved from water supplies near natural-gas wells in the Marcellus and Utica Shale areas. The study asserts that methane gas is leaking from wells and into nearby homes and that the accumulation of methane gas in small areas can lead to asphyxiation and explosion.

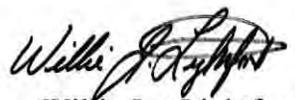
Natural-gas drillers are specifically exempt from federal standards required by the *Clean Water Act*, *Clean Air Act*, and the *Safe Drinking Water Act*. Not until recently has New York State required energy companies to disclose the chemicals used in the hydro-fracking solution. Lack of transparency and governmental oversight create the potential for compromising the health of innocent citizens as energy companies continue to drill without full knowledge of the impact of hydro-fracking and how to handle its toxic wastewater. Given the contentious nature of this process, New York State should allow local municipalities to decide whether they want to allow this type of extraction in their jurisdictions.

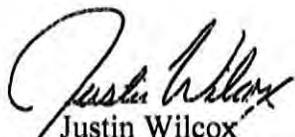
Therefore, we urge you to join us in memorializing the New York State Legislature to pass and Governor Cuomo to sign into law A8557 and S5830, an Act to Amend the Environmental Conservation Law, in Relation to Allowing Local Governments to Enact or Enforce Certain Laws and Ordinances Governing Oil, Gas and Solution Mining; and to Repeal Certain Provisions of Such Law Relating Thereto, to allow municipalities to decide whether they want to permit hydraulic fracturing in their communities.

Respectfully submitted,


Carrie M. Andrews
Assistant Minority Leader

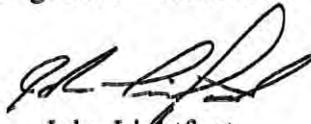

Ted O'Brien
Democratic Minority Leader

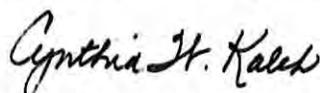

Willie Joe Lightfoot
Assistant Minority Leader


Justin Wilcox
Legislator - District 14


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Legislator - District 24


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