

## NY Legislature Could Place Moratorium on Fracking

*Senate committee passes bill for one-year moratorium*

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On Monday, June 14 the Senate Environmental Conservation committee passed a bill that would place a one-year moratorium on hydraulic fracturing (fracking) in New York State. The bill (S8129), sponsored by Antoine M. Thompson, would suspend – until June 1, 2011 – all permits requiring fracking.

The state, Thompson notes, needs more time for adequate review and analysis of the effects of this type of drilling on water quality, air, the environment, safety and public health. If fracking is going to be done, he wants to make sure it is done in a responsible way.

Thompson isn't the only one trying to marshal such a bill through the state legislature. Senator, Joseph P. Addabbo, Jr. is also sponsoring a bill (S 07592) that would place a moratorium on fracking until 120 days after the federal Environmental Protection Agency issues their report on the effects of hydraulic fracturing on water quality and public health. Assemblywoman Barbara Lifton is co-sponsoring the Assembly version of that bill (A10490), known as the "Englebright bill".

They haven't reached the floors of their respective houses yet – as of June 15 both bills have yet to clear the Rules committee – but the proposed legislation has generated a lot of controversy, bringing both pro-drilling and environmentally minded landowners to Albany to lobby over the past month.

According to Brad Gill, executive director of the Independent Oil & Gas Industry of NY (IOGA-NY), New York's existing regulations are fine. Combined with the pending Department of Environmental Conservation changes, existing regulations provide adequate protection to the environment.

"What New York needs now is leadership toward a new energy economy for our state, rather than another bill rife with inaccuracies and false assumption," Gill said on Monday.

Katherine Nadeau, Water & Natural Resources Program Director for Environmental Advocates of New York, disagrees. "New York's current oil and gas regulations are woefully out of date," Nadeau told *Broader View Weekly*. "We need new ground rules before drilling moves forward." Even though the regular legislative session is scheduled to end on June 21, Nadeau believes that they will remain in session until they come up with a state budget.

But even with the budget a priority, the legislature continues to move on other matters. "There's still time in this legislative session for the Assembly and the Senate to act on shale issues," Nadeau said.

While some landowners fear that the Thompson bill would prevent them from cashing in on the gas beneath their land, others feel that a year-long time-out from fracking isn't

enough. “Experiences in other states, combined with scientific research show, without a doubt, that there is currently no safe way to do high-volume chemically-laced hydraulic fracturing for natural gas,” says Cecile Lawrence.

Lawrence, the Green Party candidate for the U.S. Senate seat to which Kirsten Gillibrand was appointed, stresses that health effects and environmental risks are unacceptable. “People must take into account the entire toxic process of fracking,” she said, noting that the Green Party advocates a nationwide ban on hydro-fracking.