



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James L. Seward

Don't Cut Public Out Of Gas Drilling Process

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ONEONTA, 10/29/09 -- State Senator James L. Seward (R/C/I – Oneonta) is calling on the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to hold additional public hearings for those interested in commenting on the draft Supplemental Generic Environmental Impact Statement (SGEIS) for natural gas drilling applications.

“This document will have far-reaching, long-lasting effects on our energy future, the environment and the landscape as a whole,” said Senator Seward. **“It is imperative that local citizens and governments are afforded every possible opportunity to comment before the regulations are finalized.**

“While the DEC has worked diligently to prepare a well thought out permitting procedure, additional hearings would ensure that all local stakeholders have an opportunity to be heard,” Seward added.

In a letter to DEC Commissioner Alexander “Pete” Grannis, Seward requests additional hearing sites, including Oneonta. Seward says that there is a demonstrated local interest in the topic and additional hearings should be scheduled to accommodate concerned citizens. At this time, the nearest public hearing site is more than an hour’s drive for many of his constituents.

Seward also asks that the comment period for the draft SGEIS be extended past the current November 30, 2009 deadline.

“The draft SGEIS is over 800 pages long, certainly it is reasonable to allow homeowners and local government leaders some extra time to review the document that will be used to regulate energy and environmental practices for generations to come,” said Seward.

Senator Seward was among over 300 people who attended a hearing at SUNY-Oneonta last December regarding gas well drilling in the Marcellus Shale.

“Utilizing the tremendous energy resources in the Marcellus Shale formation could play a significant role in helping us to reduce our dependence on foreign oil while at the same time providing a boost to the local economy. We must make sure, however, that our local governments are properly informed of drilling activities every step of the way, and that our roads and water supply are properly protected,” Seward concluded.

The complete letter from Senator Seward to Commissioner Grannis is attached.

Commissioner Alexander B. Grannis
Department of Environmental Conservation
625 Broadway
14th Floor
Albany, N.Y. 12233

RE: Public Comment Sessions
Natural Gas Drilling / SGEIS

Dear Commissioner Grannis:

The publication of the department's new draft SGEIS has prompted a great deal of discussion, questions, and comments to my office from constituents on both sides of the issue. I applaud the department's painstaking effort to develop the document.

Because one of the original scoping sessions was held in Oneonta, and because of local interest in the issue of drilling in the Marcellus Shale, I am writing to request that the department add public comment sites to its schedule and that Oneonta be included. Our area has the facilities to accommodate a large meeting at either of two colleges or community sites that include schools and a performing arts theater. The closest site for most of my constituents interested in the issue is an hour's drive away, and the announced schedule includes only four (4) public comment hearings. I suggest that at least one or two additional meetings be added to correspond with the number of scoping meetings.

Let me also restate the request I have heard from local governments and citizens that the comment period be extended to lengthen full public participation and comment. We must ensure the broadest possible comment from the public so that

there can be no doubts that the final GEIS was the product of a thorough process.

We need local energy sources so we can reduce what we buy from nations who don't like us very much. At the same time, the public needs confidence in our regulatory structure -- that drilling and extraction will be done carefully and that our roads and environment will be protected.

Thank you for your efforts.

Sincerely yours,

JAMES L. SEWARD

State Senator