



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrea Stewart-Cousins

Protecting New York's Drinking Water

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(35th District – NY) Today, Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins announced the Senate Democratic Majority has passed legislation mandating a temporary moratorium on gas drilling (“hydro-fracking”) to ensure adequate time to research safety measures and regulations. Gas drilling in New York could contaminate the drinking water of more than 12 million NYC-area residents.

The Senate, on August 3, 2010, overwhelmingly passed S8129B/Thompson by a vote of 48-9. This bill provides for a suspension, until May 15, 2011, of the issuance of new permits for the drilling of a well which utilizes the practice of hydraulic fracturing. The legislation is now awaiting action by the Assembly before it can be sent to the Governor for his support.

This moratorium will help to accomplish several goals, including:

- Providing an extended period of time to study this new technology before permits are issued and drilling is allowed.
- Ensuring environmental experts and the public have time to review any proposed regulations and offer ways to make them stronger.
- Allocating enough time for the Legislature to review the DEC's conclusions on the environmental impact of the gas drilling.

“When comes to the preservation of our environment, and the quality and safety of drinking water for New Yorkers, it is critical that time is allotted to get the decision right. The current moratorium on hydro-fracking will ensure that the appropriate time is available to examine this important issue and fully consider the environmental and economic impact on our communities, prior to irrevocable damage, and with a full understanding of the risks,” said Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins (35th District – D/WF).

Hydro-fracking is the process of breaking apart the rock under the earth, in which some natural resources are trapped, by forcing millions of gallons of waters mixed with chemicals into the ground. These chemicals then work their way into the regular water supply.

The side effects of this process are extraordinarily costly and personally devastating, as families across Pennsylvania and other states have learned after rushing into drilling. The public health concerns are well documented and economically, if something went wrong, New Yorkers cannot afford to foot the bill. On top of the economic and health concerns, there are considerable safety hazards within the untested drilling process. Since May there have been two instances of gas wells exploding, and both took lives.

The extended time to research and study hydro-fracking technology provided by the moratorium will ensure New York does not join states like Pennsylvania and suffer the same consequences. Our state must take the alternate path to study this new technology and its effects in order to appropriately protect both our people and our environment.

The first step preserving safety for New Yorkers has been taken by the Senate, and as the DEC is beginning to prepare for the drilling license process it is crucial that the Assembly takes immediate action.