



District 1 Health Care Coordinating Council

December 12, 2011

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York State
NYS Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Re: CWA Health Care Coordinating Council resolution on hydrofracking

Dear Governor Cuomo:

As the Chair of the District 1 Healthcare Coordinating Council for the Communications Workers of America (CWA), I am writing regarding concerns we have about the hydrofracking process and its potential impacts on human health and the environment.

On December 2, 2011, the CWA District 1 Health Care Coordinating Council adopted the following resolution:

“The CWA Health Care Coordinating Council (HCCC) is a network for 15,000 CWA health care workers in District 1, which includes New York and New Jersey.

On the basis of current evidence, we are unconvinced that horizontal hydrofracking can be carried out in New York and New Jersey in a way that is protective of public health.

The HCCC requests elected officials and regulators to prohibit horizontal hydrofracking in New York and New Jersey.

As health care workers, we request that this prohibition remain in effect unless rigorous data are produced demonstrating practices under which horizontal hydrofracking can be undertaken without serious impacts on public health and water quality.”

As health care workers, we would be on the front line of any public health problems that result from hydrofracking. To date, there has been no training or outreach to health care workers in New York that would prepare us for the specifics of hydrofracking accidents, spills or exposures.

We have taken note of the 2008 incident in Durango, Colorado where ER nurse Cathy Behr was diagnosed with chemical exposure after treating a worker who had been involved in a fracking spill. According to press reports, Ms. Behr suffered a swollen liver, erratic blood counts and lungs filling with fluid, and stated “I couldn’t breath. I was drowning from the inside out.”

Recent reports from the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Department of Energy (DOE) have reinforced our resolve on this issue. The DOE report, released November 18th, notes

“The Subcommittee believes that if action is not taken to reduce the environmental impact accompanying the very considerable expansion of shale gas production expected across the country – perhaps as many as 100,000 wells over the next several decades – there is a real risk of serious environmental consequences causing a loss of public confidence that could delay or stop this activity.”

The December 8th release of an EPA draft report on water contamination in Pavillion, Wyoming is also instructive. The EPA found contamination from methane and fracking chemicals in area groundwater. The report looked at alternative explanations for the contamination but concluded their findings “best support” hydraulic fracturing as the source.

Governor, the evidence is mounting on an almost weekly basis that the industry does not have a secure handle on how to hydrofrack safely. We urge you not to sign off on this process unless and until they are able to clearly prove that shale gas resources can be processed responsibly, without sacrificing public health and the environment.

Thank you for your consideration of our resolution.

Sincerely,

John Klein
Chair, CWA District 1 Health Care Coordinating Council

JAK/BN

Cc:

Hon. Dean Skelos, NYS Senate Majority Leader
Hon. John L. Sampson, NYS Senate Minority Leader
Hon. William J. Larkin, Jr., NYS Senate Majority Whip
Hon. Jose Peralta, NYS Senate Minority Whip
Hon. Kemp Hannon, Chair, NYS Senate Health Committee
Hon. Mark Grisanti, Chair, NYS Senate Environmental Conservation Committee
Hon. George D. Maziarz, Chair, NYS Senate Energy and Telecommunications Committee
Hon. Sheldon Silver, Speaker, NYS Assembly
Hon. Brian M. Kolb, NYS Assembly Minority Leader
Hon. Barbara M. Clark, NYS Assembly Deputy Majority Whip

Hon. Daniel J. Burling, NYS Assembly Minority Whip
Hon. Richard N. Gottfried, Chair, NYS Assembly Health Committee
Hon. Robert K. Sweeny, Chair, NYS Assembly Environmental Conservation Committee
Hon. Kevin P. Cahill, Chair, NYS Assembly Energy Committee
Hon. Charles E. Schumer, US Senator
Hon Kirsten Gillibrand, US Senator
Dr. Nirav R. Shah, M.D., M.P.H., Commissioner, NYS Department of Health
Mr. Joseph Martens, Commissioner, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation
Mr. Francis J. Murray, Chairman, NYSERDA
Mr. Lawrence P. Cohen, President, Communications Workers of America
Mr. Christopher M. Shelton, Vice President, Communications Workers of America
Mr. Bob Master, Legislative and Political Director, Communications Workers of America
Ms. Rita Yelda, Food and Water Watch
Ms. Lisa Wright, Director, Shaleshock
Mr. Walter Hang, Toxics Targeting
Mr. Josh Fox, Artistic Director, International WOW Company
Mr. Albert Brown, Drilling Defense, Buffalo, NY
Mr. Jeff Bohner, Chair Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter

Members of the NYS High-Volume Hydraulic Fracturing Advisory Panel

Hon. Stan Lundine, former NYS Lt. Governor
Ms. Kathleen McGinty, former Chair of Clinton White House Council on Environmental Quality
Ms. Kate Sinding, Senior Attorney, Natural Resources Defense Council
Mr. Eric A. Goldstein, Senior Attorney, Natural Resources Defense Council
Mr. Robert Hallman, Board Chair, NY League of Conservation Voters
Mr. Robert F. Kennedy Jr., President of the Waterkeeper Alliance
Mr. Robert Moore, Executive Director, Environmental Advocates
Mr. Mark Brownstein, Chief Counsel, Energy Program, Environmental Defense Fund
Ms. Heather Briccetti, Acting President & CEO, Business Council of New York State, Inc.
Mr. Robert B. Catell, Chairman, Advanced Energy Research Center at SUNY Stony Brook
Mr. Mark K. Boling, Exec. Vice President, General Counsel and Secretary, Southwestern Energy
Hon. Tom Libous, NYS Senate Deputy Majority Leader
Hon. Donna Lupardo, NYS Assemblymember