

*On Friday July 18, 2008 Rep. Samuel Rohrer (R-Pa.-128<sup>th</sup> District), and a group named "House Republican Public Relations" sent out the press release below. It is a communication structured to scare, smear, and misrepresent the very serious issues surrounding the potential drilling of tens of thousands of horizontal and vertical deep gas wells throughout the Marcellus Shale area. Negative "talking point" tactics are employed to emotionalize the issues, to create an "us against them" interaction (Republicans vs. Democrats, "Pennsylvania farmers" vs. "radical environmentalism"...), and to dumb it down to a point where natural gas is confused with the current price of gasoline and home heating oil. In this scenario drilling becomes patriotic, while concern for our land, air and drinking water becomes "elitism".*

*On the morning of July 22, 2008, WNYC Radio in New York City published an in-depth report on the environmental concerns that Rep. Sam Rohrer is attempting to whitewash. Although the immediate concern of the WNYC report revolves around actions taken and not taken by the New York State DEC in support of a bill the DEC railroaded through the Legislature, the main body of the article is extremely informative on the major environmental problems posed by horizontal deep well drilling and fracturing. The report also exposes the astonishing ignorance of some very important people within the DEC who repeated false industry "facts" to NYS legislators during their power point presentation. This false information helped sway many legislators to vote overwhelmingly in favor of the Gas Industry interests. Please view [www.wnyc.org/news/articles/104157](http://www.wnyc.org/news/articles/104157) for the article by Ilya Marritz, and <http://timesunion.com:80/AspStories/story.asp?storyid=705332> for another excellent version by Abrahm Lustgarten.*

*Since the structure of the press release put out by "House Republican Public Relations" jumps all over the place, I thought it clearest and simplest to intersperse my comments immediately after theirs. We can't seem to keep the lid on the price of oil, but we can still try to protect our land, air and water.*

*We would hope this to be the goal of everyone, regardless of political orientation. (Commentary is in blue)*

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## **Rohrer Warns of Negative Effects of Gas Drilling Shutdown**

Friday, July 18, 2008

State Representative Sam Rohrer (R-Berks) today warned Governor Ed Rendell that outgoing Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Secretary Kathleen McGinty's strong arm tactic to shut down several major Pennsylvania drilling rig operations for alleged water use violations will hinder the lowering of gas prices, energy independence and economic stimulus for Pennsylvania. **"Strong arm tactic" = proper enforcement of the law. "...shut down several major Pennsylvania drilling rig operations for alleged water use violations will hinder the lowering of gas prices, energy independence and economic stimulus for Pennsylvania." This statement is false and absurd, period.**

"Governor Rendell must immediately exercise his executive authority to overrule Secretary McGinty's restrictions imposed on all drilling companies attempting to access Marcellus Shale gas deposits," said Rohrer. "Our state risks losing this potential multi-billion revenue stream opportunity before pumping can even begin on a wide spread basis. Without question, this matter requires urgent resolution, not the least of which is reducing unbearable, family budget-breaking gasoline and home heating costs." **First, the**

**restrictions are Pennsylvania DEP restrictions, not Secretary McGinty's. The DEP enforced the law. That is their job. Rep. Rohrer would rather have the DEP roll out the red carpet for the drilling industry. That is his goal. Second, a "multi-billion revenue stream" is not more important than our land, our air and our water. If and where drilling occurs, it must be done properly so that our environment is protected. Third (again), the protection of our water and environment in Pennsylvania has nothing to do with "family budget-breaking gasoline and home heating costs".**

Recently, a Penn State and State University of New York study concluded that the Marcellus Shale, located largely in a line from southwest to northeast Pennsylvania, West Virginia and Ohio, contains vast amounts of natural gas—up to 500 trillion cubic feet. Labeled as an "unexpected treasure" by USA Today, the drilling techniques available now are able to recover about 50 trillion cubic feet, providing our state with a viable alternative source of energy and a tremendous boost to the Pennsylvania labor market. Marcellus gas is a natural gas equivalent that costs roughly \$66 and provides the same energy output when compared to a \$130 barrel of oil. **The data mentioned here are incomplete and misleading. It doesn't even mention New York State as part of the Marcellus. More importantly, the estimates of recoverable natural gas in the Marcellus Shale vary from conservative (16.8 trillion cubic feet) to optimistic (51.4 trillion cubic feet). The United States consumed more than 23 trillion cubic feet in 2007. The Marcellus would translate into a nine month to 2.25 year supply of natural gas for the United States at that rate of consumption. What rational being could claim this would bring us "energy independence"? The impact that drilling will have on the Pennsylvania labor market is highly questionable and has not been discussed in any intelligent manner. Rep. Rohrer would simply have us accept that it would be a "tremendous boost". Yes, gas companies would reap billions in profits, and land owners who lease to them would be enriched, but what about the rest of us?**

According to Rohrer, McGinty's decision has two important repercussions: encouraging foreign energy dependence and dealing Pennsylvania gas drillers a devastating public policy setback. **Again, protecting our water and land is not "encouraging foreign energy dependence". Why does Rep. Rohrer not want to protect our water and land? Why does he want to gut the DEP? As far as "Pennsylvania gas drillers", Atlas Energy is a major player in the Marcellus, with Rex Energy, Penneco Oil, Inc and East Resources, Inc. playing a much smaller part. They have corporate offices in Pennsylvania, but BP Global, Range Resources, Chesapeake Energy, Linn Energy, Exco Resources, XTO Energy, Cabot Oil & Gas Corporation, Equitable Resources and Quest Resources do not. In any case, all of these are national or international companies. To call any of the companies listed above "Pennsylvania gas drillers" is like calling Deutsche Bank or Wells Fargo a New York bank because it has offices in New York City.**

This blocks them from extracting ground water without first obtaining both Susquehanna River Basin Commission (SBRC) and DEP water use permits. **Thank goodness. Each horizontally drilled well uses between three to five million gallons of water. If the industry plans to drill tens of thousands of wells, isn't it a good idea for the DEP and the River Basin Commissions to assess and control the cumulative impact? If not them, who?**

This bars all Pennsylvania sewage treatment facilities from accepting and reprocessing drilling operation waste water until DEP can retest its entire operation for water safety. **The chemicals, biocides and proppants used in the drilling and fracturing process have been declared proprietary, and are currently not required to be publicly disclosed. How can local sewage treatment plants that are not set up to remove such toxic heavy metals, chemicals, and biocides, and that do not even know what these products are, successfully remove the toxic materials? The WNYC Radio report states "The Department of Energy lists produced water from gas drilling as among the most toxic of any oil industry byproduct...it must be dealt with as toxic industrial waste." Why does Rep. Rohrer want it to be ineffectively treated, then released into our drinking water system?**

Before these new restrictions (now enforced by the DEP, SBRC and DCNR), any drilling company operating in Pennsylvania was allowed to take their drilling waste water to any local sewage treatment facility. **Whether the restrictions are new or not is not the issue. The DEP and the River Basin Commissions always had the responsibility of insuring a proper quantity and quality of water, and to protect the land. Now it is faced with the prospect of a massive industrial footprint being created in extremely sensitive areas.**

**There has not been such drilling in either the Susquehanna or Delaware River Basins before. Each well drilled leaves between six hundred thousand and two million gallons of a toxic sludge unrecoverable in the drilled hole. The "recoverable" 2.4 million to four million gallons of this**

***unknown waste must be treated properly. It is absolutely imperative that legislators force the companies to publicly disclose the chemicals so that it can be treated successfully, and so that emergency services, if faced with a disaster, know what they are dealing with and can take the proper precaution.***

For example, Range Resources was shut down by the DEP for alleged water use violations a few weeks ago after only extracting 3 percent of the flow from Big Sandy Run. The company's massive drilling rig, which was trucked in from Texas, is now sitting idle. Company officials must wait 90 days to apply for their SBRC water use permit to continue its Marcellus gas drilling operation. ***One well "only extracted 3 percent" according to the press release. Therefore, twenty wells would extract 60 percent. If the gas industry has it's way, it would easily place twenty wells within a one square mile (640 acres) area. No matter how many wells withdraw water simultaneously, the point is that the industry goal of tens of thousands of wells calls for a massive impact upon our water supply. Why is Rep. Rohrer against protecting our drinking water supply? The release noted that "the company's massive drilling rig, which was trucked in from Texas...". I thought these were "Pennsylvania gas drillers"? Where are the workers from?***

"Pennsylvania citizens need to understand that, spiking energy costs are not accidental," said Rohrer. "Rather, the direct culprit behind our skyrocketing gas and fuel prices is the dangerous ideology that high gas prices are actually desirable. This is exemplified in the policy decisions of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Al Gore, with whom McGinty worked under the Clinton administration. They believe that the extreme financial hardship caused by the increased expense is good, as it will force Americans to adjust their consumption habits and feel guilt over using our resources and living normal lives." ***The current high price of energy has absolutely nothing to do with a "dangerous ideology" supposedly supported by people concerned about the environment. If anything, deep horizontal well drilling with fracturing in the Marcellus area has only become feasible as a result of extraordinarily high oil prices as well as high natural gas prices. If these prices fall, there will be no profit, therefore, there will be no drilling. If there is a conspiracy to keep prices high, follow the money.***

"The Press Enterprise recently reported that any farmer who permits a gas drilling rig to operate on his or her farm will immediately lose their DCNR Clean and Green grant funding eligibility and must return any money they received from the first day they enrolled in the program," said Rohrer. "This policy captures the anti-drilling mentality permeating through the entire Rendell administration at its worst, since 20 of America's largest drilling companies have already paid \$1 billion to Pennsylvania farmers and land owners in 'good faith' to obtain the rights to drill on their private property. ***Clean and Green is a tax assessment reward given to those landowners with over 10 acres who elect to not develop the land, or use it in certain ways. Whether one puts up a house or a gas well, the change in status causes the landowner to lose the benefit retroactively. This has always been a simple fact, and has nothing to do with an "anti-drilling mentality", especially on the part of the Rendell administration. The landowners knew they would be responsible for this back payment resulting from a change of status since the day they applied for the Clean and Green designation.***

"Our state has the opportunity to seize upon a great economic stimulus by tapping into the Marcellus shale," Rohrer continued. "By preventing companies from drilling, not only do those businesses lose out in the short-term, but Pennsylvania also rebuffs the possibility of creating the long-term economic boom experienced in Texas through the drilling of the Barnett shale." According to the Barnett Shale Economic Impact Study, "The state benefits through increased economic activity of an estimated \$10.1 billion in annual output and 99,726 jobs" in 2007. This administration cannot be so short-sighted to reject this unequalled opportunity. ***The State does not want to "prevent companies from drilling", it does want to protect our land and water and air. They must be protected. Why does Rep. Rohrer want to proceed at full speed when he doesn't know where he is going? Why does Rep. Rohrer not want to protect the environment?***

"Until the Marcellus gas starts flowing into the pipelines, Pennsylvania landowners will not be paid one penny in royalties that they are desperately counting on to save their homes and family farms. I believe that Pennsylvania has the innovation to lead the way to energy independence for our entire nation. Therefore, it is simply unacceptable and unconscionable for Secretary McGinty, the governor or any other taxpayer funded agency to legislate or mandate the mantra of radical environmentalism. This will cripple our state and national economies when new technologies already exist that allow us to responsibly construct drilling sites and thereby create new jobs by extracting oil, coal, gas and other 'home grown' natural resources," Rohrer added. ***"...mandate the mantra of radical environmentalism..." This last paragraph smells like***

*something died. Let us bury it. Please give Rep. Rohrer and Ty McCauslin a piece of your mind. Please read the articles by Ilya Marritz and Abrahm Lustgarten. Please stay informed and active.*

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