

ANOTHER VOICE / ENVIRONMENT

# Proposed gas drilling ban counterproductive for city

By **Mike Doyle**

Published: January 29, 2011, 12:00 AM

[1 Comment](#)

Updated: January 29, 2011, 6:29 AM

The Common Council of the City of Buffalo is considering an ordinance to ban all natural gas drilling within the city limits. Forgetting for a moment that there has been no drilling in the city for years, and that the city is prohibited by state law from enacting such a ban — one Council member was heard to say, “Let them sue us!” — it is perplexing to those familiar with the gas drilling process why such an ordinance would even be considered.

More troublesome is why some attendees at last week’s hearing before the Committee on Legislation cheered when a speaker noted that, “If Erie County . . . were to follow your [Buffalo’s] lead, my company along with a number of others here in Western New York would be faced with the unhappy prospect of going out of business . . .”

To date, more than 75,000 oil and natural gas wells have been drilled in New York, including in the City of Buffalo; 14,000 of these remain active and have an excellent track record on environmental compliance and safety standards.

This is not merely an industry claim. The state Department of Environmental Conservation has indicated in no uncertain terms that there has been “. . . no record of any documented incidents of groundwater contamination caused by hydraulic fracturing for gas well development in New York despite the use of this technology in thousands of wells across the state during the past 50 or more years.”

Some opponents of natural gas drilling have indicated at Council hearings that their intention in supporting such an ordinance that is admittedly ineffectual is to send a “message” to other localities around the state. If, in fact, other localities followed suit — Erie County, for example — taxes to the county would be lost, landowners would not receive royalties, numerous jobs would be lost and the state’s ability to produce its own supply of clean-burning domestic natural gas would be forestalled.

Unfortunately, much of what opponents to natural gas drilling learn about hydrofracturing appears to come from sources, including the Internet, that are a combination of half-truths, misinformation and wild speculation. Once this misinformation becomes public, it is difficult to temper it with reliable scientific information and expertise, even with credible sources.

But separating the scientific evidence and regulatory experience from emotional and unfounded allegations is precisely what we have a right to expect of our public officials. Banning natural gas drilling, in a city that by all accounts is in an economic crisis, takes the city’s focus away from meaningful legislative action and arguably sends a message to the business community that Buffalo is not truly committed to retaining existing businesses and attracting new and necessary industries.

*Mike Doyle is executive director of the New York State Petroleum Council.*

---

## Comments

---

**SORT:** [NEWEST FIRST](#) | [OLDEST FIRST](#)

An industry shill who is pushing all the buttons - jobs, taxes, homeowner rights, supposed clean energy. The fact is, northwestern Pennsylvania is beginning to resemble the oil fields of Oklahoma - the landscape is a checkerboard of cleared countryside since each drilling pad requires acres of land and its own road for access. There are large retaining ponds next to each fracked well, lined with plastic to contain the used, toxic fracking water that came up from the depths contaminated with radioactivity. The process requires millions of gallons of water which have been withdrawn from rivers in Pennsylvania illegally. There are also numerous instances of drilling companies being caught and fined for simply dumping the fracking water along roadways. Contrary to what is stated above, citizens opposed to fracking do not get their information from chat rooms, on the other hand, they sure don't get it from the industry, which has labored mightily to keep the contents of their toxic fracking chemical cocktail secret and free from proper government oversight and regulation. There is enough natural gas under the Marcellus Shale to last this country for the next 200 years. There is no need for citizens and their government to stand idly by while the industry pollutes our drinking water with their modern-day gold rush.

**JAMES HUFNAGEL, WILSON, NY** on Sat Jan 29, 2011 at 12:54 PM

[REPLY](#)   [FLAG AS INAPPROPRIATE](#)

**Add your comment**

Copyright 1999 - 2010 - The Buffalo News copyright-protected material.