

## Gas-drilling advocates get their day in Albany

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ALBANY — After groups opposing hydraulic fracturing swarmed Albany three times in the past two months, the natural gas industry got its day at the Capitol on Wednesday.

About 50 members of industry and other pro-gas groups met with lawmakers on the Legislature's environmental conservation committees, urging them to stand back and let the state Department of Environmental Conservation complete its review of permitting guidelines for hydrofracking, the controversial technique in which chemical-laced water is injected deep into tight shale formations to release gas.

Dozens of bills that deal with the gas industry have been introduced by the Legislature this year and last, from legislation concerning liability issues to a bill introduced by Sen. Anthony Avella, D-Queens, that would ban hydrofracking altogether.

"The DEC is staffed by the engineers and scientists who have the expertise to navigate this issue and put in place the protections that are needed," said John

Conrad, president of Poughkeepsie-based Conrad Geoscience Corp.

The Independent Oil & Gas Association of New York, a trade group representing oil and gas producers, organized Wednesday's lobbying effort.

The day was free of any sort of public rally, instead focusing on private meetings with officials.

Drilling in the Marcellus Shale, which sits beneath the Southern Tier and parts of the Hudson Valley, has been on hold since July 2008, when the DEC launched its review. The most attractive areas for drilling are in the eastern Southern Tier, in the Binghamton region.

"This is the only industry that I can think of that is ready to put jobs and money into the economy of New York state, which is badly needed," said Dave Palmerton, owner of The Palmerton Group, a small environmental-consulting firm that contracts with companies involved in

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Environmentalists have been critical of hydrofracking, saying that it could be harmful to land, air and groundwater.

William Cooke, director of government relations for Citizens Campaign for the Environment, dismissed the industry's plea to legislators, saying now is the right time for lawmakers to intervene.

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