

## New York state gubernatorial candidates divided on fracking

By Jon Campbell • [jcampbell1@gannett.com](mailto:jcampbell1@gannett.com)  
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If Monday's gubernatorial debate is any indication, natural gas development and hydraulic fracturing in New York should be one of the major issues confronting the state's next top executive.

All seven candidates for the office addressed the issue at the debate at Hofstra University on Long Island, prompting a wide variety of positions that ranged from banning hydrofracking entirely to drill, baby, drill.

"It was obvious to anybody watching that natural gas drilling and shale drilling is going to be one of the premiere issues that the next governor takes on," said Katherine Nadaeu, water and natural resources program director for Environmental Advocates of New York.

Republican candidate Carl Paladino repeated his call for immediate natural gas drilling outside of the New York City watershed, while Democratic candidate Andrew Cuomo said he would be supportive of drilling as long as hydrofracking -- a drilling technique -- is proven safe first.

"Hydrofracking has been proven to be a well-developed technology today," Paladino said. "In Pennsylvania and Ohio they are using it, and they are making a lot of money, billions of dollars."

Two fringe candidates -- Green Party candidate Howie Hawkins and the Freedom Party's Charles Barron -- called out Cuomo for not taking a stance against the practice, which is currently on hold in New York as the state reviews its permitting guidelines.

"Notice Mr. Cuomo didn't say he would ban hydraulic fracturing because his business cronies make too much money off of that," said Barron, a New York City councilman who supports a ban.

Kristin Davis, the former "Manhattan Madam" running on a pro-marijuana platform, said New York is missing out while other states drill.

"I actually support hydrofracking and drilling in the Southern Tier," Davis said. "We're sitting on millions of dollars in natural gas and oil, and I think that there are environmentally safe ways of extracting this.

A spokesman for the Independent Oil & Gas Association of New York said some candidates were better informed than others.

"I was encouraged to see that the candidates who support natural gas exploration support it because it can be done safely, it has been done safely and it will continue to be done safely," said James Smith, a spokesman for the Independent Oil & Gas Association of New York. "Many of the candidates just didn't understand it at all, and showed their naivety, for a lack of a better word, by saying hydrofracking as if it's something new, and using as a term in place of natural gas exploration."

Nadeau said the environmental community will continue to work to get its message across to the next governor.

"It came across that this is something that is on the candidates' minds, and I think it's something that the voters of New York have spoken very clearly on, and we're going to hold them to making sure that the protections are in place in the state no matter who gets elected," she said.



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