

Ridge brings team to boost shale drilling

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By Tom Barnes, Post-Gazette Harrisburg Bureau

HARRISBURG -- Pushing for more Marcellus Shale drilling comes at a hefty price.

Former Gov. Tom Ridge and a team of officials at his two consulting firms will be paid \$900,000 for a one-year contract as strategic advisers to the Marcellus Shale Coalition, coalition spokesman Travis Windle said Monday.

One of the ex-governor's firms, Ridge Global, will earn \$50,000 a month, starting now, and another, the Ridge Policy Group, will get \$25,000 a month, for 12 months. The coalition announced Friday that Mr. Ridge would take the industry lead in Marcellus issues.

Besides Mr. Ridge, Duncan Campbell, who was his chief of staff when he was the U.S. homeland security secretary several years ago, will work with him at Ridge Global, Mr. Windle said. They will do "public outreach and education" about the importance of the natural gas pumped from underground areas of Marcellus Shale in Pennsylvania, as well as "coalition building," advising the Marcellus group and speaking at public forums.

Mr. Windle said that Mr. Ridge will not be a registered lobbyist in Pennsylvania and will not lobby state legislators about a proposed natural gas tax or other subjects. Gov. Ed Rendell wants legislators to approve a severance tax on the thousands of cubic feet of gas taken from the underground shale, hoping it will raise at least \$100 million a year for the state.

Handling the chore of lobbying the Legislature will be two former aides from Mr. Ridge's days as governor (1995-2001), Mark Holman and Mark Campbell, no relation to Duncan Campbell.

Mr. Holman and Mark Campbell, are part of the legislative advocacy group.

"That is where the lobbying will be," Mr. Windle said. "The former governor and his team bring an assembly of ... experts to assist our efforts to move forward" with developing the natural gas industry in the state.

He said Mr. Ridge and his aides "will work alongside our member companies to help Pennsylvanians better understand the tremendous opportunity the responsible development of Marcellus Shale represents to the state."

The coalition includes more than 100 companies, "the vast majority of shale gas producers in Pennsylvania," Mr. Windle said, along with pipeline firms, environmental engineers and consultants, legal experts and construction contractors.

A year from now, the coalition will decide whether to retain the Ridge firms for more work.

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