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## US anti-fracking bill gets Oscar hopeful's support

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\* Bill to be reintroduced in House in weeks

\* Measure faces uphill battle in Republican House

By Timothy Gardner

WASHINGTON, Feb 17 (Reuters) - Hoping success rubs off, a U.S. lawmaker had the director of the Oscar-nominated film "Gasland" near when announcing he will reintroduce a bill making companies reveal chemicals used in natural gas drilling.

"Before this country embraces natural gas as the solution to our energy needs ... we need to take every step possible to ensure our water is not contaminated, our air is not polluted, and our communities are not irrevocably harmed," Representative Maurice Hinchey of New York, who will reintroduce the bill, said at a press conference.

Natural gas is considered cleaner than coal, its biggest competitor, because it emits less of the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide when burned for generating electricity.

But the U.S. natural gas boom in recent years has relied heavily on a drilling technique called hydraulic fracturing, or fracking. Some have charged that fracking has polluted drinking water supplies, and environmental groups have urged the industry to reveal the chemicals used in the process.

In fracking, drillers inject millions of gallons of highly pressurized water and chemicals deep underground to break rocks that release oil and gas.

"Gasland" which has been nominated for an Academy award, shows residents in Pennsylvania, Colorado and other states complaining that fracking has contaminated their water supplies and hurt their health. Families are shown setting tap water alight due to what they say is fracking contamination.

Hinchey said he plans to reintroduce the Fracturing Responsibility and Awareness of Chemicals Act, known as the Frac Act, in coming weeks.

The bill, which fizzled last year, would have required drillers to disclose fracking chemicals under the federal clean water law, closing the so-called Halliburton loophole. It would also have given the Environmental Protection Agency the option of overseeing the natural gas industry.

Sponsors will include House Democrats Jared Polis and Rush Holt. But it faces an uphill battle in the Republican-controlled chamber.

Director Josh Fox, who has shown "Gasland" at events throughout the country, said at the press conference that hundreds of thousands of U.S. citizens, if not millions, are trying to make the industry to adopt safeguards.

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Daniel Whitten, a spokesman the America's Natural Gas Alliance, an industry group, said his group has an "honest disagreement" over whether new federal regulations are necessary and that a voluntary reporting system for disclosing chemicals used in fracking is expected to launch next month.

(Reporting by Timothy Gardner; Editing by David Gregorio)

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