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OF PENNSYLVANIA**

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Residents rally against gas drilling bills at Senator Tomlinson's district office

Series of Southeast rallies raise concerns over possible Marcellus Shale giveaway in pending Harrisburg legislation

Glenn Mills, PA- A group of constituents gathered outside of state Senator Tomlinson's office today to voice their concerns about Marcellus Shale legislation being proposed in Harrisburg that could be voted on as early as this week. According to the organizers, the proposed legislation could dramatically weaken Pennsylvania's local control laws and let Marcellus Shale gas drillers off of the hook from paying an appropriate impact fee.

"It's outrageous that our legislators are about to give gas drillers this gift during the holiday season," said **PennEnvironment Field Director Adam Garber**. "Senator Tomlinson should give the gift of clean drinking water to all Pennsylvanians by voting no on this legislation, rejecting the billion-dollar gas drilling industry and their well-heeled lobbyists that roam the capitol. "

The rally was organized by a coalition of environmental and civic organizations including PennEnvironment, the Delaware Riverkeeper Network, Sierra Club, Conservation Voters of Pennsylvania, PennFuture, Clean Water Action, the League of Women Voters and Protecting our Waters. It is part of a series of rallies this week outside of Southeastern Senator offices that are seen as swing votes on this legislation: Senator Erickson, Senator Greenleaf, Senator McIlhinney, Senator Tomlinson, Senator Rafferty and Senator Tomlinson.

Planned rallies for this week are: SENATOR TOMLINSON: Monday, 12:30 – 1:30 PM; SENATOR PILEGGI: Monday, 11:30 AM; SENATOR GREENLEAF: Tuesday, 12 PM-1 PM; SENATOR MCIILLHINEY: Wednesday, 12 PM-1 PM; SENATOR RAFFERTY: Wednesday, 4:30 PM; SENATOR ERICKSON: Wednesday, 3 PM.

“HB1950, the so-called impact fee bill, is a direct attack on Pennsylvania’s home towns and will destroy the ability of towns to protect residents from gas drilling and fracking. This basically puts the State and gas drillers in the driver’s seat when it comes to local zoning and planning,” said **Maya van Rossum, the Delaware Riverkeeper for Delaware Riverkeeper Network**. “This Bill must be stopped from becoming law to protect drinking water and communities,” concluded van Rossum.

The groups are holding rallies targeting Senate Majority Leader Pileggi, along with Senator Tomlinson, and other moderate Republicans in southeast Pennsylvania, to highlight their vote that could severely damage local environmental controls and implement a weak impact fee.

"Loss of local control over the impact from the hydrofracking process is a terrible price to pay for the penance offered up by this legislation," said **Dennis Winters, Chair of the Pennsylvania Chapter of the Sierra Club**, "The state senate needs to protect threatened Commonwealth municipalities and kill this bill."

The Senate and House recently passed far-reaching, omnibus Marcellus Shale gas drilling bills that include varying impact fee proposals. The components of greatest concern for local residents and environmental groups include:

- Municipal control over gas drilling: In its current form, HB1950 dramatically strips the power of local communities to protect themselves from dangerous gas drilling. HB1950 would require local governments to allow gas operations in all zones, including residential.
- Impact fee: HB1950 lets polluters off the hook from paying their fair share – the bill creates one of the lowest extraction fees in the nation, as well as bonding levels far too low to properly fund even the most basic accidents that occur from gas drilling, setting the stage for Pennsylvania’s residents to pay for environmental pollution related to gas drilling for generations to come, instead of gas drillers.

The Municipal Planning Code is the means towns have to plan and manage the resources within their jurisdiction but this legislation, as written, will gut that ability in regards to the dangers of gas drilling. None of the proposed changes in the Oil and Gas Act replace what the municipality can do now in regards to location, setbacks and local protections. The current proposal effect will be to weaken regulation of drilling statewide and increase the likelihood of pollution and negative impacts to communities.

President Olivia Thorne affirms the concerns of the **League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania** and notes "The preemption of local ordinances represents big government control of its citizens for the benefit of a single industry. Pennsylvanians feeling strongly that there should be a cooperative relationship between the levels of government and support the need for a degree of local control."

“This bill falls short of protecting Pennsylvanians, our local communities and our environment,” said **Anne Crowley, Southeastern Pennsylvania Outreach Coordinator for PennFuture**.

“Significant improvements must be made to the bill. These improvements must reflect the interests of Pennsylvania taxpayers and not the gas drillers.”

The Legislature only has a few days to finalize Marcellus legislation before recessing for the holidays. It is unclear whether the Senate and House can agree before they take a break until January 2012.

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