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## **Environmental and Citizen Groups Call Out Legislators on Oil and Gas Regulations**

Letter urges legislators to support swift approval of revisions to Chapter 78/78a to help ensure protections from both conventional and unconventional drilling

Harrisburg, PA – Environmental and citizen groups representing hundreds of thousands of Pennsylvanians submitted a letter to the members of the Pennsylvania House and Senate Environmental Resources and Energy Subcommittees urging support for the swift adoption and implementation of the revisions to Chapter 78 of the Oil and Gas Act for conventional operators and the new Chapter 78a for unconventional operators.

The groups drew special attention to the efforts of some legislators led by Senator Gene Yaw and Representative John Maher to derail the adoption of the revised Chapter 78 regulations for conventional oil and gas development. Previous attempts were made to amend the fiscal code with a prohibition on adopting rules for conventional drillers but those attempts failed due to repeated vetoes by Governor Wolf. Now these legislators are pushing to pass legislation that would stall the adoption of Chapter 78.

“The continued actions by some of our elected officials show they place a greater value on the industry’s desires than the public’s needs,” said Steve Hvozdoich, Campaigns Director, Clean Water Action. “They’re clearly acting as mouth pieces for the industry by parroting their unfounded rationale that the regulations will put drillers out of business, that they weren’t properly set apart from the unconventional regulations, and that DEP failed to consult with the industry.”

“These regulations were subject to extensive public comment over three years. How anyone could claim industry wasn’t given a fair opportunity to weigh in is disingenuous, considering they had more opportunities than ordinary Pennsylvanians to use the extensive and multiple public comment periods to provide feedback,” said Thomas Au, conservation chair for Pennsylvania Sierra Club.

“Today most oil and gas wells—conventional and unconventional alike—rely on hydraulic fracturing, toxic chemicals, and large volumes of water, disturb land, and generate waste,” said

Nadia Steinzor, Eastern Program Coordinator, Earthworks. "After years of operating with impunity, industry is selfishly demanding continued regulatory gaps that leave countless environmental problems unchecked and force the public to bear the environmental, health, and financial burdens of drilling."

"Delaying the adoption of the proposed revisions would let drillers off the hook and put the public health and economic burden of dealing with water and air pollution on residents and will allow the environmental degradation caused by drilling to continue without urgently needed changes," said Tracy Carluccio, Deputy Director, Delaware Riverkeeper Network.

"This latest attempt by industry to derail the adoption of the Chapter 78 & 78a regulations, which would protect the public health of tens of thousands of Pennsylvanians, looks like nothing more than a temper tantrum thrown by a frustrated toddler used to getting his own way," said Krissy Kasserman, Youghiogheny Riverkeeper. "This industry is so accustomed to influencing to influence our political system that it is apparently now unable to accept that, at least in this instance, the public and our elected officials are largely in favor of these regulatory changes."

The groups' letter also emphasized that while they believe that drilling in Pennsylvania will continue to pose risks to people and the environment, they strongly support the revised oil and gas regulations because they offer better protections than those currently in place. Among others, these include inclusion of school property and playgrounds in the list of public resources; prohibitions on pits and open-top structures for waste storage; investigation of orphaned, abandoned, inactive, and plugged wells before drilling; and immediate notification of spills, releases, and other incidents.

The groups intend to take their message to the Independent Regulatory Review Commission, which will consider the revisions at the end of the month.

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