

MAURICE D. HINCHEY
22ND DISTRICT, NEW YORK

WASHINGTON OFFICE:
2431 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-3222
(202) 225-6335

www.house.gov/hinchev

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3222

November 10, 2011

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
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JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE

Delaware River Basin Commission
25 State Police Drive
PO Box 7360
West Trenton, NJ 08628

Dear Commission Members:

I am writing to reiterate and convey my strong opposition to the DRBC's adoption of Natural Gas Development Regulations for the Delaware River Basin, which I understand will be considered at the Commission's meeting on November 21, 2011. I urge the Commission to suspend approval of regulations until a comprehensive and cumulative environmental impact statement has been completed to ensure the protection of the Delaware River Basin's outstanding water resources. The promulgation of final regulations that allow any natural gas development without completion of necessary studies is contrary to public interest and certain to face additional legal challenges.

As someone who has held the DRBC in high regard for its work over the past decades to protect the nationally-significant water resources of the Delaware River Basin, I am deeply concerned that the Commission may now take action that will lead to the degradation of water resources on which more than 15 million Americans depend. Further, I believe the adoption of regulations that have not been informed by the necessary environmental reviews and science threatens to undermine the Commission's credibility and effectiveness as the protector of one of this nation's critical waterways. With the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency currently studying the impact of hydraulic fracturing on water resources, it is somewhat perplexing how an agency charged with protecting water resources seems poised to allow natural gas development without having done its own study or waiting for the results of this critical analysis.

While the amended draft regulations have been developed and revised to lower certain risks of natural gas drilling, the fact remains that the Commission cannot effectively protect the Delaware River Basin without scrutinizing the cumulative impact of hundreds or thousands of new wells in the Basin. While the DRBC notes that it is working to promote sound practices of watershed management, it has failed thus far to study or measure the substantial impacts we can expect from large scale deforestation and other activities that will accompany natural gas development. Without such studies, there is no guarantee that the DRBC's regulations are sufficient to protect the Basin. Further, such studies might lead the Commission to a conclusion that this major industrial activity may be wholly incompatible with protecting water quality, particularly in the sensitive headwaters of the Delaware River.

BINGHAMTON OFFICE:
100A FEDERAL BUILDING
BINGHAMTON, NY 13901
(607) 773-2788

ITHACA OFFICE:
123 SOUTH CAYUGA STREET
SUITE 201
ITHACA, NY 14850
(607) 273-1388

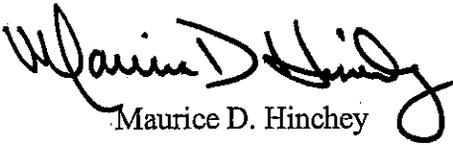
KINGSTON OFFICE:
281 WALL STREET
KINGSTON, NY 12401
(845) 331-4466

MIDDLETOWN OFFICE:
CITY HALL, THIRD FLOOR
16 JAMES STREET
MIDDLETOWN, NY 10940
(845) 344-3211

MONTICELLO OFFICE:
18 ANAWANA LAKE ROAD
MONTICELLO, NY 12701
(845) 791-7116

I therefore stand with the tens of thousands of Basin residents who have spoken out against the approval of these regulations without cumulative impact studies, and I urge you to suspend further action until such studies are done. Like so many of my constituents, I fear that the decision you are preparing to make in a few weeks could adversely impact many generations to come and irreparably damage the Basin's invaluable water resources.

Sincerely,



Maurice D. Hinchey