

*Washington, DC -- Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today released the following statement regarding the U.S. Department of Interior's release of a draft rule to require gas companies to publicly disclose the chemicals used in hydraulic fracturing operations on public and Indian lands. Hinchey is a leader in Congress of the effort to protect drinking water and the environment from the risks of hydraulic fracturing. He is a co-author of the FRAC Act, which would mandate public disclosure of chemicals used in frack fluid and allow the EPA to regulate fracking activities under the Safe Drinking Water Act. The congressman also authored the appropriations language that led to the current EPA study on hydraulic fracturing.*

"I am pleased that the administration is taking a first step toward requiring gas companies to disclose the chemicals they are pumping into the ground as they use hydraulic fracturing to extract natural gas from public lands. Until now, gas companies have left the public in the dark and gone about gas drilling without any true public understanding of exactly what they are pumping into the grounds we all collectively own as Americans. That's poised to change thanks to these draft rules.

"However, I believe that this draft rule must be improved. In its current form, the rule would only require disclosure after gas drilling was already completed, not before. That's not good enough. If we are truly serious about ensuring the public is well-informed about the hydraulic drilling process -- and we need to be -- then the American people deserve to know what chemicals gas companies are going to use before they commence drilling. Knowing after the fact is nice, but does not allow for any steps to be taken if the chemicals being used are of concern to the public. I urge the Interior Department to strengthen this rule.

"Finally, as I've said all along, public disclosure is only part of the answer. It's time to repeal the Safe Drinking Water Act exemption granted to the gas industry under the 2005 Bush-Cheney energy bill. No industry should be exempt from our laws to protect drinking water. If gas drilling is completely safe to drinking water supplies as gas companies claim it to be, then those companies should have no objection to the EPA monitoring the process.

"Passing the FRAC Act in Congress would require full public disclosure for all fracking activities in the U.S. and restore the EPA's ability to oversee fracking and its impact on drinking water supplies. It's time for Congress to pass that bill."

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