



Senate Environmental Resources and Energy Committee

Senator Mary Jo White
Chairman

Patrick Henderson, Executive Director

Room 169 • State Capitol Building
Mailing address: Senate Box 203021 • Harrisburg, PA 17120-3021
Phone: 717-787-9684 • FAX: 717-787-6088 • energy@pasen.gov

August 9, 2010

Letters to the Editor
Chambersburg Public Opinion
77 North Third Street
Chambersburg, PA 17201

Dear Editor:

Matt Major's recent opinion piece ([New York Benefits from Our Example?](#)) misleads your readers and unfairly characterizes the efforts of both the General Assembly and the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to regulate natural gas drilling in Pennsylvania.

While Mr. Major notes that DEP's budget has been significantly reduced, he incorrectly assumes this has translated to less oversight of natural gas drilling. Nothing could be further from the truth. Your readers deserve to know that last year Pennsylvania significantly increased the permit fees paid by drillers. This has enabled DEP to shift the burden of paying to oversee the industry from general taxpayer dollars to the industry. The fee revenue increase – over \$10 million annually – has let DEP double its inspection and enforcement staff, hiring nearly 100 new personnel.

DEP's budget, like most state agencies, has certainly been affected by the economic recession. The legislature cannot appropriate money that is not there, and there has been no appetite to raise taxes during a recession. While the budget will unfortunately impact DEP staff levels, some of the funding cuts were either for discretionary grant programs, or were more than replaced by federal stimulus dollars, such as water and sewer and energy efficiency rebates. Since last year Pennsylvania has, among other steps, adopted new wastewater treatment rules, upgraded the stream protection status of numerous waterways, enacted a new well reporting disclosure law and will soon finalize well construction standards that are among the strictest in the nation.

DEP Secretary Hanger was right to criticize the New York Senate's passage of a drilling moratorium, because it was based on an inaccurate and skewed understanding of the steps Pennsylvania has taken to aggressively regulate this activity while also recognizing the significant economic and clean energy opportunities it presents. While there must be a continuing commitment to ensuring that our laws and regulations are sufficient to protect our natural resources, Pennsylvanians can rightfully be proud of the steps taken to date.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary Jo White".

Mary Jo White, Chairman
Senate Environmental Resources
& Energy Committee