

Interfaith Statement on Hydrofracking

September 4, 2012

Dear Governor Cuomo, legislators, and elected leaders,

As people of reason and faith, care of the earth, its inhabitants, and future generations are of great importance to us. We have been supportive of the current moratorium on hydraulic fracturing for natural gas extraction in New York so that impacts can be assessed. However, in light of mounting evidence of significant harm to the environment, human health, and communities in areas where fracking has occurred and indications that the DEC could soon begin issuing permits, we are now compelled to speak out in opposition to use of the technology as it has been presently developed.

Fracking activities underway in Pennsylvania and elsewhere have been shown to cause significant and irreversible damage, both above and below ground. As proposed, the technology constitutes a grave danger to land, air, and water resources of our entire region, should it come to New York. While we appreciate the economic difficulties of neighbors, we believe it is a moral obligation for all of us to work together toward addressing human needs while building a sustainable future that is respectful of the earth and the well-being of future generations who shall inherit this world. The intrinsic beauty of our planet and abundance of life it sustains are far beyond the capacity of humankind to create; however they are not beyond the capacity of humankind, as creatures with intelligence and compassion, to protect.

In consideration of the above, the undersigned clergy, religious leaders, and communities of faith join together in signing the attached resolution in support of bans on the use of hydraulic fracturing for the extraction of natural gas. Furthermore, we strongly encourage the pursuit of sustainable economies, renewable energy, and conservation so that New York may be an example of good stewardship of the earth and an advocate for the well-being of its inhabitants.

Sincerely,

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Interfaith Impact of New York State
(Rev. Dr. Richard S. Gilbert, President)

New York Yearly Meeting of the
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(Christopher Sammond, General Secretary)

Peace and Justice Committee
Saint Mary's Roman Catholic Church
(Kathleen Shirm, Maryann Dowdell,
Marjorie Pietrafacc, Carmel All Sperti-de Armas)
Oneonta, NY

Public Policy Advocacy Network
Synod of the Northeast
Presbyterian Church (USA)
(Rev. Dr. Janet Adair Hansen, Moderator)

Social Justice Council
First Unitarian Church of Rochester, NY
(John Keevert, Co-Chair)

(affiliation of individuals shown for identification purposes only)

An Interfaith Resolution Concerning the Dangers of High-Volume Hydraulic Fracturing

— August 2012 —

Whereas, as people of reason and faith, and members of diverse religious traditions, we recognize the blessed abundance of the earth and rich diversity of life that inhabits this world;

Whereas, we are all called to be good stewards of the planet we share, which requires that resources of land, air, and water be managed in a responsible and sustainable manner;

Whereas, consistent with our faith, we have a moral obligation to prevent harm to our fellow human beings, including future generations who will inherit the earth;

Whereas, horizontal high-volume hydraulic fracturing (“fracking”) is a recently-developed technology for the extraction of methane gas from shale rock, involving the injection of large quantities of water or other fluids, toxic chemicals, and proppants into the ground under explosive pressure to create and hold open fractures in gas-bearing shale;

Whereas, new information has emerged regarding the significant dangers of fracking, causing independent experts to conclude that the technology poses a serious risk of immediate, long-term, or even permanent harm to land, air, and water resources; said harm occurring through the migration of methane and toxic chemicals into groundwater supplies, airborne gas and chemical emissions, induced seismic activity, disposal of fracking fluids, and the widespread fragmentation of ecosystems and loss of wildlife caused by large-scale proliferation of drilling sites and related infrastructure;

Whereas, new information has emerged regarding incidents of contamination and sickness in Pennsylvania and other areas where fracking has occurred, leading medical professionals to question industry claims that natural gas can be extracted safely without endangering human health;

Whereas, an industrialized landscape created by the large-scale proliferation of fracking threatens to supplant existing and emerging economies which offer hope for a more sustainable future, protective of the earth and people, including but not limited to locally-owned family farms, wineries, organic agriculture, outdoor recreation, ecotourism, and businesses rooted in the rich history and rural heritage of upstate New York;

Whereas, current state law regarding Compulsory Integration can force landowners, who for economic, environmental, medical, or ethical reasons oppose fracking, to allow horizontal drilling and the injection of toxic chemicals beneath their own private property so that gas companies can fracture the earth beneath them and extract natural gas;

Whereas, due to the political, legal, and regulatory framework in which the fossil fuel industry presently operates, communities that have been subjected to intense and widespread fossil fuel extraction, including fracking, disproportionately suffer the consequences of extraction through environmental injustice and social-economic exploitation, without equitably sharing in the financial benefits enjoyed by industry; and

Whereas, recognizing that natural gas has existed within shale formations since early geologic time and will continue to reside there should alternative technologies be developed for its safe extraction in the future, it is imprudent and morally objectionable to proceed with current methods of fracking in light of the inherent and significant risks posed to the environment, human health, and society.

Now, therefore be it resolved by the undersigned clergy, religious leaders, and communities of faith that we:

- § Oppose current methods of horizontal high-volume hydraulic fracturing and support local and statewide bans on use of the technology;
- § Encourage the development of sustainable economies, renewable energy, and conservation measures so that New York State may serve as an example of good stewardship for the earth and an advocate for the well-being of its inhabitants; and
- § Urge our members and colleagues to support this resolution with concrete actions and encourage other communities of faith to join with us in its support.