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House of Representatives  
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA  
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September 18, 2010

Dear Friends:

I apologize that I could not be with you today to participate in this forum on what is a very important issue facing Pennsylvania: the extraction of natural gas in the Marcellus Shale play. Actually, the Marcellus play presents us with three issues each of which is intertwined with the others.

- First, what are the environmental impacts of the gas extraction or hydraulic fracturing process
- Second, how do we protect the property rights (land and mineral) of those whose land is most directly affected by this industry?
- Last, should we tax the oil and gas industry by passing a drilling or severance tax as every other state with sizable natural gas resources has done?

I know you are gathered today to talk about that last issue and it is an important one. But I'd like to take a moment to address the first two issues as well.

By now the environmental hazards posed by the hydraulic fracturing process – potential contamination of groundwater and drinking water sources, dewatering lakes, rivers and streams, surface impacts and infrastructure damage – are well documented. But potential solutions to these problems are slow to come. Our state Department of Environmental Protection needs to be given the resources to monitor this activity and we need to pass strong new regulations that are designed to protect our water and ensure that our other natural resources are not harmed. At the same time we must stop drilling in our state forests, which is why I cosponsored the bill that would impose a moratorium on that drilling and require study of the environmental impacts of the hydraulic fracturing process.

We also need to protect the rights of those people who will be most directly impacted by this industry and the communities in which they live. We must say unequivocally and with resolve that we will not allow the preemption of local zoning in the communities in which the drilling is taking place or

forced pooling. Forced pooling would give oil and gas companies eminent domain authority to seize mineral rights from landowners if enough of their neighbors have already signed leases to the company.

Finally, it is time that we pass a reasonable drilling tax on the oil and gas industry. As I noted earlier, every other major natural-gas producing state has one. The argument that this is an industry in its infancy is belied by the fact that large multinational corporations like ExxonMobil and Shell are involved in the play. Equally mistaken is the claim that this tax will raise the cost of natural gas to consumers as most of the gas now sold in Pennsylvania comes from states where such a tax already exists, so it is already built into the price. But if we pass a drilling tax, the revenue that it generates must be used wisely. That is why I support adequate funding for remediation, drilling oversight and environmental stewardship.

The natural gas drilling question is one of the most important issues to face this Commonwealth in generations. The policies we enact now will have implications for decades. The past is littered with examples of where our state got it wrong when it came to the environment and energy. We can't afford to repeat those mistakes. The stakes are too high.

I applaud all of you for coming out today to learn more about this important issue and I hope that you continue your efforts to engage your neighbors, our community and our elected officials in an ongoing dialogue on the many important aspects of natural gas drilling in Pennsylvania.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve Santarsiero", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Steve Santarsiero