

Guest Viewpoint: Fracking is too dangerous for Tier to be N.Y. test area

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Written by Dan Lamb

My name is Dan Lamb, and I am running for Congress at the geographic epicenter of the debate over hydraulic fracturing. Our new 22nd Congressional District stretches from the Southern Tier to Utica and includes all or part of three of the five counties in which Gov. Andrew Cuomo may permit fracking without an independent assessment of the health, environmental and economic effects.

This plan could have catastrophic consequences for the environment and well-being of upstate New York families, and that is why I have decided to take a strong stand against it moving forward. I firmly believe that the Southern Tier should not be used as the guinea pig for New York's shale gas experiment. If shale gas extraction is not safe everywhere in New York, it is certainly not safe anywhere in New York.

My opponent, on the other hand, has invested millions with large oil and gas companies, including some of those responsible for environmental contamination in Pennsylvania and elsewhere. Rep. Richard Hanna voted repeatedly to maintain subsidies for the oil and gas industry, but called investments in renewable energy "pathetic." He has not signed on to the FRAC Act or made any effort to address the risks of hydraulic fracturing. We can't trust him to take this issue seriously.

The choice couldn't be clearer. This is the first race in the country about hydraulic fracturing. It is a referendum on unsafe, unstudied drilling, and it's a race we must win. The good news is that a strong majority of residents in our part of New York agree. In a recent poll of our congressional district, 57 percent of voters took a stand against hydrofracking, even though the region has been bombarded for years by millions of dollars in industry-funded advertising.

We've seen the videos of families lighting their faucets on fire. We've read of blowouts, explosions and spills. We've heard of dead livestock and sick children, sullied water and noxious air. We've learned there are millions and millions of gallons of contaminated drilling waste with no safe place to go. But what we haven't seen are enough leaders in government who are willing to act responsibly to protect public health and the environment before it's too late.

For the past 15 years, I have served as a senior aide to a national environmental champion, Rep. Maurice Hinchey. He had the foresight to oppose unregulated and unstudied hydraulic fracturing in New York's Marcellus Shale, and now that he is retiring, I am ready to stand up to Albany, Washington and the shale gas industry to protect the health and safety of New York families, but I can't do this alone. Please visit www.danlambforcongress.com to learn what you can do to help.

Lamb is a Democrat running for Congress in New York's new 22nd District.