

Fracking opponents target Cuomo supporters

8:38 PM, Aug. 1, 2012



Walter Hang, president of Toxics Targeting, speaks at a Wednesday news conference about natural gas drilling in the Southern Tier. Pictured, from left to right, are Ben Perkus of New York Residents Against Drilling, Binghamton Mayor Matthew T. Ryan, Hang, Sue Rapp of Vestal Residents for Safe Energy, and Erin Heaton Meyer of Chenango Community Action for Renewable Energy. / STEVE REILLY / STAFF PHOTO



Written by Steve Reilly

In an effort to get the ear of [Gov. Andrew Cuomo](#), opponents of hydraulic fracturing in the Southern Tier have penned a letter to 1,000 of his closest friends.

[Binghamton Mayor Matthew T. Ryan](#) and others who have concerns about the natural gas extraction technique gathered in front of Binghamton City Hall on Wednesday to discuss a letter they sent to the 1,000 largest contributors to Cuomo's campaign [fund](#).

"These are essentially many of the most prominent people in New York State politics," said [Walter Hang](#), an Ithaca activist and owner of environmental database firm [Toxics Targeting](#). "We believe that this is going to force the governor to listen to many of the concerns that have been introduced up until now."

The letter comes in response to a leaked report out of Albany last month indicating that officials are considering issuing an initial round of permits for [hydrofracking](#) only in pro-drilling communities within [Broome](#), [Tioga](#), [Chenango](#), [Chemung](#) and [Steuben](#) counties.

Ryan said he signed on to the letter to urge Cuomo not to factor politics into his decisions on fracking, which has been on hold in New York since the state [Department of Environmental Conservation](#) began studying the technique in 2008.

"(Cuomo) originally said this was going to be based on science...and now all of the sudden he's floating the idea of having a place where we're going to try this technology out," he said. "I don't think that those two things are really compatible."

The one-page letter sent to Cuomo's donors states that the proposal "would treat Southern Tier residents as second class citizens and unfairly subject them to potentially irreparable hazards." Along with Ryan and Hang, it is co-signed by leaders of three Southern Tier anti-drilling groups.

In recent months, at least nine of Broome County's 16 town boards have passed identical resolutions expressing confidence that DEC "will develop a program that allows development of our natural gas resources to proceed in a safe, responsible, and competitive manner."

Those resolutions have stirred some measure of controversy as well. At a separate news conference Wednesday, five opponents of natural gas drilling from the towns of [Windsor](#), [Barker](#), [Sanford](#) and [Triangle](#) argued that they don't represent the opinion of the majority of residents in those communities.