

NY Assembly approves 2-year fracking ban

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A bill prohibiting large-scale hydraulic fracturing for two years has passed the New York State Assembly.

The bill, back by [Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver](#), passed today by a vote of 95-40. Getting it past the Republican-controlled Senate, however, will not be as easy. The bill does not yet have a Senate sponsor and hydrofracking legislation has not been taken up by the Senate since 2010.

The legislation prevents the state from issuing permits for the controversial method of drilling for natural gas, even if the appropriate documents are [completed](#). High-volume fracking has not yet been permitted in New York state, but could be as soon as the [Department of Environmental Conservation](#) finalizes an Environmental Impact Statement it has been crafting since 2008.

In addition, the legislation directs a SUNY school of public health to [complete](#) a full study of the health impacts of fracking before it moves forward.

Like many in Albany, lobbyists were split on the issue.

“The Assembly’s passage today of a two-year moratorium on fracking ... is exactly the right approach and will ensure this process occurs as it should – by getting answers before making a decision,” said Katherine Nadeau, water and natural resources program director for the [Environmental Advocates of New York](#).

But business groups, like the [Business Council of New York State](#), weren’t as happy with the Assembly as their environmental counterparts.

“To those members who supported this moratorium, we say, for the past four years substantial state resources have been dedicated to the scientific review of shale gas extractions, it is time to listen to science and not to emotion and reject unnecessary delay.” said Heather Briccetti, president and CEO of The Business Council of New York State. “There are very few opportunities available with the same [job](#) creating potential as the exploration and development of shale gas. Actions like today’s vote hinder constructive dialogue that will provide a pathway to the safe and sustainable development of shale gas which can help to transform New York’s economy.”

Patricia Els, president of Farmingdale-based [Advanced Waste & Water Technology](#), also called the move “shortsighted.”

“I just don’t believe that they’re thinking all of this through, and the benefits that fracking could have for the overall economy,” said Els, whose company offers mobile wastewater-treatment units, commonly used at fracking sites. “I don’t know if [Gov. Andrew] Cuomo will actually act upon this and put it into law. It seems very silly to me that on the Pennsylvania border, Pennsylvanians are benefiting from the fracking industry, but people farming [next](#) door in the southern tier of New York can’t benefit from the same industry.”

Gregory Zeller contributed to the reporting of this story (Long Island Business News, www.libn.com).