

MEMORANDUM

TO: All House Members

FROM: Representative Camille George

DATE: March 3, 2011

SUBJECT: Co-Sponsorship Memo for Radiation Testing on Drinking Supplies

I soon will be introducing legislation calling for mandatory radiation testing of water potentially affected by Marcellus Shale natural-gas drillers and operations. The testing would be required both before and after treatment but always before it is released into waterways used for drinking supplies. The testing would be paid for by the gas companies but performed by independent and certified water-testing companies.

Both the acting DEP secretary and his predecessor have indicated such testing is worthy of consideration in the wake of the Feb. 27 New York Times story that suggested a lack of radiation tests at 65 public water intakes downstream from releases of Marcellus wastewater.

In today's edition of the New York Times, it is reported that an early draft of a 2004 EPA study discussed potentially dangerous levels of contamination in hydrofracking fluids and mentioned "possible evidence" of contamination of an aquifer. The final version of the report excluded these points, concluding instead that hydrofracking "poses little or no threat to drinking water." EPA documents, available on the Times website, indicate EPA officials also were considering a moratorium on hydrofracking.

However, an EPA whistleblower, according to the Times, said the agency had been strongly influenced by industry and political pressure to soften the study.

Meanwhile, two water providers -- the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority and Pennsylvania American Water Co. -- have said they will begin testing water supplies because of the reports.

Pennsylvanians deserve clean water and assurances that it is safe to drink. My measure would help to provide those assurances. If you agree, and would like to cosponsor this legislation, please call my office at 787-7316 or email me at cgeorge@pahouse.net.

CG/mjm