

Clean Air Task Force • Clean Water Action • Earthjustice • Earthworks • Environment America • Food and Water Watch • Greenpeace USA • League of Conservation Voters • Natural Resources Defense Council • Sierra Club

The Honorable Janice D. Schakowsky
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515-1309

July 31, 2013

Dear Representative Schakowsky,

On behalf of our millions of members, supporters and volunteers, we thank you for introducing Safe Hydration is an American Right in Energy Development Act (SHARED) Act. Communities across the country have become increasingly concerned about the threats of oil and gas operations, including hydraulic fracturing (fracking), to drinking water sources. Oil and gas activities have contaminated groundwater in states across the country, and more needs to be done to protect drinking water sources as well as water resources needed for local agricultural operations and other activities. We appreciate your longstanding support for this effort.

Testing water sources near planned oil and gas operations to establish baseline conditions is essential for an effective water protection regime and is based on fundamental scientific principles. Without a proper baseline, the presence of contamination can be established but determining the source of that contamination is challenging and subject to uncertainty. That is why the U.S. Secretary of Energy Advisory Board (SEAB) called for mandatory background water measurements prior to production activity in order to provide an objective baseline for determining if drilling and hydraulic fracturing activity are responsible for water contamination.

Baseline testing can significantly reduce the costs of investigating water contamination reports. It can also help regulators respond to water contamination complaints in a more efficient manner. It is a win-win solution to improving water contamination investigations.

Some states realize the benefits to all of baseline testing. Approximately five states have some sort of baseline testing requirement, and a few more have rules that do not require but encourage it. However, hydraulic fracturing is occurring in at least thirty states. The state laws on the books are not strong enough, and they only exist in a small fraction of states where water is at risk from fracking operations. With more than half of the states experiencing fracking, this is truly a national issue that demands a national solution.

Again, thank you for your leadership on this issue.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Banks, Senior Climate Policy Advisor, Clean Air Task Force
Lynn Thorp, National Campaigns Director, Clean Water Action
Jessica Ennis, Legislative Representative, EarthJustice