

Testimony for Delaware River Basin Commission

Landowners are the backbone of any town in rural America. Their property taxes pave the roads, keep the parks and schools open, pay for every service and function of town government. In this tight economy, we ask a lot of landowners when they reach for their checkbooks to pay their taxes. Property taxes are a contract, a bargain, between landowners and their communities. The proposed regulations of the Delaware River Basin Commission would break that bargain. Break that pact.

As these regulations are written, landowners in rural communities wouldn't be able to drill on their land. Because in the country, a body of water, be it a stream or a farmer's pond, is always close. A 500 feet setback from any body of water makes gas drilling impossible. Depriving towns and villages of an engine of economic growth, and denying property owners the right to develop their land.

This is not what residents pay taxes for. Not what property owners in my community want. Not what citizens of our country expect from their government. And I fear that these regulations will set a new standard, a troubling standard, for intruding on the rights of landowners. A new standard for taking powers and responsibilities out of the hands of local communities and placing those powers, those responsibilities, in the hands of unelected officials. As an elected official, I answer to the voters where contentious issues should be decided: at the ballot box.

I care for the land, and I care for the people of my town. Don't let 500 feet be the difference between hope and despair, the difference between owning a part of the American dream and a foreclosure. Gas drilling in the Marcellus Shale can be done safely. But it will not be done at all if these regulations stand as they are. Change these regulations. Before more people leave Upstate New York. Before small towns in New York and Pennsylvania lose even more jobs, and Main Street is a memory, with vacant stores and empty lots to prove it.

Change these regulations.

Thank you.

Ray Williams
Town of Windsor
Supervisor