

October 13, 2009

Lifton Will Call for Longer Public Comment Period for Draft SGEIS at Assembly Hearing

Assemblywoman Barbara Lifton (D/WF-Tompkins/Cortland) announced today that she will be participating in the Assembly Environmental Conservation Committee's public hearing this Thursday, October 15th to hear testimony on the draft Supplemental Generic Environmental Impact Statement (dSGEIS) on gas-drilling recently-released by the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). On September 30th, the DEC released the online version of the dSGEIS and announced they would accept public comment for 60 days, which will end November 30th. Lifton will ask the DEC for a 180-day comment period.

"It's absolutely crucial that we allow as much public input as possible on this most important of issues", Lifton said. "The technical and complex nature of the draft makes reading it slow-going. I've spent the better part of a long weekend reading the document and have barely put a dent in the 800-plus pages."

Lifton noted that as a result of requests from business interests, the NYS Department of Transportation (DOT) recently extended the public comment period for the new truck regs, from the original 45 days to 90 days. "By comparison, the truck regs are much shorter and considerably less complicated than the draft SGEIS for gas drilling", Lifton argued.

The SGEIS, when finalized, will put in place additional criteria and regs for issuing gas drilling permits and conducting oversight for high-volume hydro-fracking in the Marcellus Shale and other shale plays in New York.

Lifton commented, "As we have seen in other parts of the country, this type of gas drilling can have a huge impact on the environment. One of the ways to avoid those problems in New York is to be absolutely sure that the regs the DEC puts in place are as strong as possible. "

"Besides this issue of process, I will be raising concerns on the merits of the dSGEIS. But as a first concern, if the trucking industry gets 90 days to respond to a few pages of new regs requiring that more large trucks drive on our four-lane highways, then surely 180 days should be the minimum given to the citizens of our state to read and understand this complicated document in order to be able to have real input into perhaps the most important environmental issue for our state in a generation," Lifton concluded.

The Assembly public hearing will be held October 15th at 9:00 a.m. in the Assembly Parlor, NYS Capital, Room 306. For more information go to www.assembly.state.ny.us/comm/EnCon/20091001/ .