



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on May 11, 2015

New York's Fracking Ban Hurting Upstate New Yorkers

When New York Governor Andrew Cuomo was running for reelection in 2012 he said he was concerned about the poor economy hurting residents in upstate New York, particularly those living along the state's southern border with Pennsylvania. Residents of Broome and Bradford counties in particular could peer across the border and see residents of Pennsylvania's Susquehanna county living better, paying less in taxes, and enjoying the economic benefits of the fracking boom.



Cuomo briefly considered lifting the state's de facto ban on fracking in those counties as a way to give their residents a chance to enjoy some of those benefits.

But only briefly.

Political reality entered the picture. Opponents of fracking followed Cuomo everywhere during his reelection campaign with signs and chanting and general verbal complaints that he would even consider such a thing. In December 2014, Cuomo folded, making permanent the state's "temporary" ban on fracking. He side-stepped any personal responsibility for the decision by blaming his advisors who allegedly knew more than he did [because they were experts](#): "I am not a scientist. I'm not an environmental expert. I'm not a health expert. I'm a lawyer. I'm not a doctor. I'm not an environmentalist. I'm not a scientist. So let's bring the emotion down and let's ask the qualified experts what their opinions [are]."

One of those experts was Dr. Howard Zucker, Cuomo's acting state health commissioner, whose ties to the Left are long, strong, and abundant. An adjunct professor at Georgetown University Law School, he served in the Health and Human Services (HHS) agency during the George W. Bush administration. He served as assistant director of the United Nations' World Health Organization, is a member of the insider-controlled Council on Foreign Relations, and served as a "high-level expert" on public health for NATO.

So his insider credentials are impeccable. He's the perfect "expert" to give Governor Cuomo his unbiased opinion on the matter of fracking. Holding up a copy of the health study (derided by observers as lacking objectivity), Zucker said that he had grave concerns about water contamination and air pollution directly emanating from fracking, claiming that there was "insufficient evidence" to affirm the safety of fracking. He asked, rhetorically: Would he want his family to live in a community where fracking was taking place? His answer? No. End of discussion.

Neither Zucker nor Cuomo asked the right question: What do the people living in Broome and Bradford counties think? A recent poll asking exactly that question showed that two out of three wanted fracking approved so they could take advantage of the opportunity lying beneath their feet: the Marcellus Shale formation.

One of those residents, Marian Szarejko, was blunt. The owner of Marian's Pizza Shack in Windsor,



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New York (located in Broome County), Marian said, “There are no jobs here. Business has gone down so much that I am dipping into my savings just to keep this afloat. If I owned a place in Pennsylvania [the border is just 10 miles south], I wouldn’t be thinking of closing. I would be thinking of expanding.”

Doug McLinko is chairman of the Bradford County (Pennsylvania) Board of Commissioners, and he has seen and is enjoying the benefits of fracking: “We are the most drilled county in the Marcellus Shale. We flow the most gas in the state. The last eight to ten years has been the most incredible boom of prosperity I have ever witnessed in my life.”

Real estate values in Bradford have grown by \$200 million in that period along with a 19-percent increase in taxable income. As a result, says McLinko, “We have cut taxes and eliminated our county debt.”

According to the Upstate New York Towns Association, it costs a family of four \$1,398 a year more for the privilege of living north of the border. New York’s state income tax is higher, property taxes there are higher, school taxes are higher, and New York levies higher sales taxes than does Pennsylvania.

Carolyn Price, Windsor’s town supervisor, said, “What would truly save this town and move economic development very fast would be the development of the Marcellus Shale.”

None of this impresses the powers that be, however, who have determined that political ideology overrides economic reality. As a result, says Price, “We have become the valley of missed opportunity.”

Photo of anti-fracking rally in Albany, New York: AP Images

A graduate of an Ivy League school and a former investment advisor, Bob is a regular contributor to The New American magazine and blogs frequently at www.LightFromTheRight.com, primarily on economics and politics.



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