March 8, 2012

Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver
LOB 932
Albany, NY 12248

cc: Assembly member Robert Sweeney
Assembly member Richard Gottfried

Dear Assembly Speaker Silver,

We applaud your efforts to include a Health Impact Assessment on gas exploration and production using high-volume, slick water, horizontal hydraulic fracturing in the New York State Assembly’s 2012-2013 budget resolution. The New York State Assembly has been a leader on this issue of the public health impacts related to high-volume hydraulic fracturing as evidenced by Assembly members Sweeney and Gottfried’s joint hearing on this matter in May 2011. You have our full public support in advancing this item in the 2012-2013 NYS budget.

Throughout the past few years, the medical community across New York has become increasingly concerned about the health impacts of hydraulic fracturing. Medical professionals have joined together with the environmental community to raise their concerns. In October 2011, 250 physicians and medical professionals wrote a letter to Governor Cuomo calling for a comprehensive public health impact assessment http://www.psehealthyenergy.org/resources/view/198813. On December 10th, Dr. Sandra Steingraber, Lois Gibbs and Fran Drescher echoed that call with nineteen NY-based cancer advocacy groups in a letter addressed to Governor Cuomo asking for the same assessment http://www.psehealthyenergy.org/resources/view/198831.

Despite these attempts to communicate serious concerns that the medical community has made, the state completely omitted an assessment of potential health impacts in the rDSGEIS. This is notwithstanding the fact that gas exploration and production using high-volume, slick water, horizontal hydraulic fracturing across the country has been associated with a range of health impacts ranging from loss of smell, memory problems, and headaches to a number of serious respiratory illnesses and cancers.

In closing, as the New York State Assembly takes a stand for New Yorkers’ public health and safety, those in the federal government are also asking for more research to be done on the health impacts of fracking including Christopher Portier, the Director of the National Center for Environmental Health at the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, Georgia. As one of the most respected researchers on health issues, Portier stated, "More research is needed for us to understand public health impacts from natural gas drilling and new gas drilling technologies." To go forward in New York without a proper health impact assessment is therefore unacceptable. We respectfully request that an appropriation of $300,000 be made for this study.

Thank you again for your courageous leadership in protecting the public health and safety of New Yorkers.

Sincerely,
Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., President, Waterkeeper Alliance
Mark Ruffalo, Actor/Director
Sandra Steingraber, Ph.D. Distinguished Scholar in Residence, Ithaca College
Richard Schrader, Legislative Director, Natural Resources Defense Council
Adam Law, MD
Larysa Dyrszka MD
David Gould, MD, MBA
Eric London, MD
Dr. William Klepack
Paul Bermanzohn, MD
Michelle Bamberger, MS, DVM
Robert E. Oswald, Ph.D.
Elie Ward, American Academy of Pediatrics District II, NYS
Katherine Nadeau, Water & Natural Resources Program Director, Environmental Advocates of New York
Roger Downs, Legislative Director, Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter
Sarah Eckel, Legislative & Policy Director, Citizens Campaign for the Environment
Paul Gallay, President, Riverkeeper, Inc.
Josh Fox, Director, Gasland
Wes Gillingham, Program Director, Catskill Mountainkeeper
Julia Walsh, Campaign Director, Frack Action
Nadia Steinzor, Marcellus Shale Regional Organizer, Earthworks
Eric Weltman, Senior Organizer, Food & Water Watch
Tracy Carluccio, Deputy Director, Delaware Riverkeeper Network
Thomas B. Wilinsky, Catskill Citizens for Safe Energy
Barbara Arrindell, Director, Damascus Citizens for Sustainability
Patti Wood, Executive Director, Grassroots Environmental Education
Claire Sandberg, Executive Director, Water Defense
David Braun, President, United for Action
Assemblyman William Colton
Stephanie Low, Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter, Gas Drilling Task Force, National Hydrofracking Team,
NYH2O Chair, Legislative/Political Committee
Susan Van Dolsen, Co-Organizer of Westchester for Change
Robert Nied, Co-Director, Schoharie Valley Watch
Tanyette Colon, Mothers United for Sustainable Technologies
Dr. Paul Torrisi President, Skaneateles Lake Association
Nicole A. Dillingham, President Board of Directors, Otsego 2000
Sheila Cohen, Gas Drilling Awareness for Cortland County
Buck Moorhead, NYH20
Chris Tate, Board of Directors, Finger Lakes CleanWaters Initiative, Inc.
Wendy Robinson, Sullivan Area Citizens for Responsible Energy Development
Adrian Kuzminski, Sustainable Otsego
Pete Comstock, Coordinator, Lumberland Concerned Citizens
Suzannah Gidden, Director, Croton Watershed Clean Water Coalition
Kenneth Jaffe, MD
Carol Roig, Co-Founder, Highland Concerned Citizens
Jack Ramsden, Steering Committee, Neighbors of the Onondaga Nation