

# Movement against Fracking Wins as New York Bans Hydraulic Fracturing

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[Popular Resistance](#)

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*In a major victory for people who have been working to stop hydraulic fracturing for gas, known as fracking, Governor Andrew Cuomo of New York announced a ban on fracking in New York State.*

This would not have occurred had it not been for the consistent and ongoing educating, organizing and mobilizing by groups like [New Yorkers Against Fracking](#) and [We Are Seneca Lake](#), among others. This has been a six year campaign of creative protests, civil resistance, direct action and local communities voting to ban fracking, a power [upheld by New York's highest court](#). One opponent of fracking, [Walter Hang](#), an environmental mapping consultant wrote:

This stupendous victory was won by an unrelenting grassroots citizen campaign powered by amazing press coverage that systematically highlighted the public health and environmental concerns of shale fracking. That effort has won a victory unparalleled in the annals of the American environmental movement.

[Tom Wilber who writes Shale Gas Review](#) which covers gas development in Marcellus and Utica shales, noted the power of the anti-fracking movement and how it related to the science on fracking:

Science is part of the calculus. But despite what Cuomo would like us to believe, scientists don't make these kinds of decisions. The full equation is Science + politics = policy. Cuomo finally got tired of being hounded on the issue by his political base. The movement in New York against shale gas was relentless and it was focused on him.

People rising up and saying 'no' to fracking made it impossible for the government to ignore the health, safety and environmental problems caused by fracking. See this [December 2014 compendium of the research](#). This victory is one that will spur the anti-fracking movement throughout the country and puts in question the fracking infrastructure being built, e.g. pipelines, compressor stations and export terminals, currently being pushed throughout the country by Big Energy.

[Inside Climate News reports](#) that Sandra Steingraber, an environmental health expert and fracking activist in New York, told them from the parking lot of a sheriff's office where she was bailing out 28 musicians arrested in an ongoing [protest against a fracked gas storage facility](#) in the Seneca Lakes region of New York that when she told the activists the news, they picked up their instruments and there was "singing and dancing in the streets." She added "Fracking is able to roll over so many communities because people are told it is inevitable. This decision emboldens us all. It shows this fight is winnable."

At a meeting in Calvert County last night where Dominion Resources is building a fracked gas export terminal, Tracey Eno of Calvert Citizens for a Healthy Community, a member of [We Are Cove Point](#), mentioned the Cuomo decision to inspire people to realize that we can defeat big energy.

Yesterday morning we received an email message urging people in New York to prepare to protest as Governor Cuomo was expected to announce three pilot fracking projects in New York, instead the governor decided to continue the moratorium on fracking. This reminds us that we often do not realize how close we are to victory, indeed people often feel like they are failing or cannot win, when in fact victory is within reach and much closer than they realize.

Cuomo spoke briefly at a press conference after his cabinet meeting announcing the fracking ban and saying he was following the advice of experts. He then turned the press conference over to them to explain the decision.

The [New York Times reports](#) that the state health commissioner expressed concerns about the health impacts of fracking:

In a presentation at the cabinet meeting, the acting state health commissioner, Dr. Howard A. Zucker, said the examination had found “significant public health risks” associated with fracking.

Holding up copies of scientific studies to animate his arguments, Dr. Zucker listed concerns about water contamination and air pollution, and said there was insufficient scientific evidence to affirm the safety of fracking.

Dr. Zucker said his review boiled down to a simple question: Would he want his family to live in a community where fracking was taking place?

[Zucker said](#) that in other states where fracking is already happening, he found that state health commissioners “weren’t even at the table.”

At the same time, Joe Martens, the environmental commissioner described the [economic stimulus from fracking was not as great](#) telling a press conference that the prospects for fracking in New York are “uncertain at best” and describing economic benefits as “far lower than originally forecasted.” As The Times reported:

Martens noted the low price of natural gas, the high local cost of industry oversight and the large areas that would be off-limits to shale gas development because of setback requirements, water supply protections, and local prohibitions. He said those factors combine to make fracking less economically beneficial than had been anticipated.

Chip Northrup, a former oil and gas investor who writes the [No Fracking Way](#) blog that opposes drilling in New York, wrote about the views of commissioners Zucker and Martens:

Both of them cited the greatly reduced area where fracking would actually take place in New York – [since most upstate towns ban it](#).

And the only towns that might allow it are in an small area by the Pennsylvania border [that is not currently economic](#). So, frankly, simply not worth fracking fooling with.

Which makes perfect sense from all standpoints: environmentally, economically and politically.

At the press conference [Cuomo said](#) "I think it's our responsibility to develop an alternative ... for safe, clean economic development."

We urge advocates and the governor to now put in place a strategy to make New York the first state to put in place a carbon-free, nuclear-free energy economy by 2025. This is not an impossible fantasy but an achievable goal. [Here is one example](#) of how New York could achieve a clean energy economy. Putting in place a clean energy policy is the kind of leadership that could revive Cuomo, who had a very difficult re-election, as a viable presidential candidate in 2020.

*Kevin Zeese is co-director of [Popular Resistance](#) which is a member of [We Are Cove Point](#) which seeks to stop the development of a fracked gas export terminal at Cove Point in Maryland.*

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