



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF PENNSYLVANIA**

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Public Comment of the
League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania
To the
Citizens Advisory Council
Of the
Department of Environmental Protection
February 19, 2013

Good morning, I am Roberta Winters, Issues and Action Vice President of the League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania. Based on our comments of recent months, I trust you understand that concern for our natural resources continues to be a priority for our members throughout the Commonwealth. Today, I have three issues I would like to share.

First, in spite of much smoke, there has been little substantive explanation of the water quality testing issues. We are hopeful that answers to some questions raised by the League and others will be forthcoming in today's presentation by Barbara Hall.

Secondly, based on our position on natural gas extraction from Marcellus Shale, the League supports *the maximum protection of public health and the environment in all aspects of Marcellus Shale natural gas production, site restoration, and delivery to the customer by requiring the use of best practices and promoting comprehensive regulation, communication, and adequate staffing across government agencies*. We are appalled that, based on an analysis of Governor Corbett's proposed budget in the PA Environment Digest,¹ an additional forty (40) positions would be eliminated from the Department of Environmental Protection. In these times riddled with so much at risk, we can ill afford such an action. As you may be aware, the DEP General Fund budget in FY 2002-03 was \$728.2 million. It is now reduced to \$127.8 million. Its full-time salaried staff was 3,211, and now its number is reduced to 2,556. We implore each of you to find your voice and encourage those in position of influence to put Pennsylvania back on track. We, and every other citizen in Pennsylvania are counting on you to help invest in the DEP to maintain our right to clean air, pure water, and the preservation of our natural resources for generations yet to come.

¹ See <http://www.paenvironmentdigest.com/newsletter/default.asp?NewsletterArticleID=24625>

Finally, after much reflection, the League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania urges the CAC to re-examine the role of the Department of Environmental Protection. Why? Let me read from the mission statement: *The Department of Environmental Protection's mission is to protect Pennsylvania's air, land and water from pollution and to provide for the health and safety of its citizens through a cleaner environment. We will work as partners with individuals, organizations, governments and businesses to prevent pollution and restore our natural resources.* When you go to the home page of the DEP website, however, one reads, *DEP is largely responsible for administering Pennsylvania's environmental laws and regulations. Each day, the department works to reduce air pollution; make sure our drinking water is safe; protect the water quality in our rivers and streams; make sure waste is handled properly; **support community renewal and revitalization; promote advanced energy technology; and help the commonwealth's citizens prevent pollution and comply with Pennsylvania's environmental regulations.***

There appears to be a disconnection between protecting the environment and promoting advanced energy technology and community revitalization. With DEP's funding and staff allocation based, in part, on permitting, a conflict may exist between its mission and its actual operations. This is similar to the potentially conflicting missions assigned to the Minerals Management Service of the U.S. Department of Interior. As you may remember, this group had oversight of the procedures that contributed to the monumental BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. Based on the disastrous consequences of an agency with conflicting interests of safety and enforcement, energy development, and revenue collection, Interior Secretary Ken Salazar stated his intent to divide the agency into three parts – each with a distinct mission.² We cannot afford to wait until an unanticipated event in Pennsylvania forces us to rethink the DEP's conflicting roles. The League encourages the CAC to begin to examine its potentially incompatible reasons for existence.

As a grass-roots organization promoting informed citizen participation in decision-making, the League is eager to hear further about the DEP's policy on public participation in the permit application review process on today's agenda. We would be remiss without expressing our appreciation for your listening ear and thoughtful consideration of the complex issues before you.

² See *BP Gulf Oil Spill: Congress zeros in on federal oversight* by Ron Scherer, May 27, 2010, Christian Science Monitor.