



## **LWV Ohio Action on Hydraulic Fracturing (Fracking)**

### Background

The League of Women Voters has taken strong positions defending the environment (See Appendix A). In 2008, the League of Women Voters of the U.S. called on Congress to enact legislation to significantly cut the greenhouse gas emissions which cause global warming, and supported increased energy efficiency and a shift to a clean, renewable energy. The League called for a moratorium on the building of new coal-fired electric power plants and supported requirements for utilities to produce a significant percentage of electricity from renewable resources (*Impact on Issues 2010-2012* p. 45).

LWVUS Convention 2010 agreed that “fracking,” where high pressure water is pumped underground to fracture geologic formations in order to release natural gas, poses a threat to drinking water and other water resources. Convention delegates passed a resolution calling for the U.S. League to “*Support and lobby for significant strengthening of appropriate regulation, oversight, inspection, and penalties associated with the development of fossil fuel resources.*”

### LWV Ohio’s Response to Concerns about Hydraulic Fracturing

In response to the national resolution, a number of State Leagues have taken action. In Ohio, LWVO sent a letter to the director of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) in February, 2011, requesting a one-year moratorium on new leases (See Appendix B). We felt that this would be sufficient time for ODNR to develop regulations which protected health and safety. In June, 2011, we testified before a Legislative committee in opposition to a bill authorizing oil and gas drilling in State Parks. The bill passed virtually on party lines.

In April and May 2012, we testified on a bill that set rules for oil and gas extraction in Ohio. We indicated several problems, including concern about disposal of the radioactive byproducts of fracking. Since the Legislature did not address this problem, we advised the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) of our concerns (See Appendix D). NRC replied that the State has jurisdiction on this matter.

Earthquakes in Youngstown began shortly after our moratorium request and culminated with a moderately large one on New Year’s Eve, 2011. These earthquakes were likely caused by filling of a deep well (injection well) with fracking-water waste. Drilling was stopped, draining the well was announced, and ODNR promised regulations to prevent further earthquakes. We wrote ODNR requesting a ban on injection wells near critical infrastructure and population centers until a comprehensive map of faults is completed (See Appendix C).

Finally, LWVO board member Kris Vessey is providing resources to—and facilitating email discussion among—Leagues and League members interested in learning more about fracking. If you would like to be part of that conversation, email Kris at [kvessey@woh.rr.com](mailto:kvessey@woh.rr.com).

## Appendix A. LWV Positions Relevant to Hydraulic Fracturing

### LWVUS Positions (*Impact on Issues 2010-2012*, p. 41, ff.)

**Natural Resources:** The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that natural resources should be managed as interrelated parts of life-supporting ecosystems. Resources should be conserved and protected to assure their future availability. Pollution of these resources should be controlled in order to preserve the physical, chemical and biological integrity of ecosystems and to protect public health.

**Resource Management:** To assure the future availability of essential resources, government policies must promote stewardship of natural resources.

**Environmental Protection and Pollution Control:** The League supports... regulation of pollution sources by control and penalties, inspection and monitoring, full disclosure of pollution data, incentives to accelerate pollution control, and vigorous enforcement mechanisms, including sanctions.

**Air Quality** The League supports...regulation and reduction of pollution from stationary sources; regulation and reduction of ambient toxic-air pollutants.

**Energy** The League supports...reduction of energy growth rates, use of a variety of energy sources, with emphasis on conserving energy and using energy-efficient technologies, the environmentally sound use of energy resources, with consideration of the entire cycle of energy production; predominant reliance on renewable resources....

**Land Use** The League supports...reclamation of lands damaged by surface mining, waste disposal,... identification and regulation of areas impacted by public or private investment where siting results in secondary environmental and socioeconomic impacts, review of environmental, social and economic impacts of major public and private developments.

**Water Resources:** The League supports water resource programs and policies that reflect the interrelationships of water quality, water quantity, ground-water and surface water and that address the potential depletion or pollution of water supplies; measures to reduce water pollution from direct point-source discharges and from indirect nonpoint sources; policies to achieve water quality essential for maintaining species populations and diversity, including measures to protect lakes, estuaries, wetlands and in-stream flows; stringent controls to protect the quality of current and potential drinking-water supplies, including protection of watersheds for surface supplies and of recharge areas for groundwater.

### LWV Ohio Positions (*Agenda for Action 2009-2011*, pp. 20-21)

#### **Water**

LWVO supports policies and procedures that provide for

Joint, cooperative planning and administration along watershed lines and across political boundaries  
Stringent water quality standards accompanied by strong enforcement and means of implementation.  
Adequate state financing, including incentives to local governments and industries for expediting  
water pollution abatement.



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## Appendix B: Request for Fracking Moratorium

February 15, 2011

Mr. David Mustine  
Director, Ohio Department of Natural Resources  
2045 Morse RD., Bldg. D  
Columbus OH 43229-6693

Dear Mr. Mustine:

At our most recent National Convention (2010), the League of Women Voters unanimously passed a resolution stating, in part, “support and lobby for significant strengthening of appropriate regulation, oversight, inspection, and penalties associated with the development of fossil fuel resources.” The need for this resolution is amply supported by the Gulf of Mexico oil spill and the Big Branch coal mine explosion. As pointed out by the resolution's sponsor, these disasters “remind us that worse-case scenarios can and do happen and the failure to require adequate safeguards increases that likelihood.” We are particularly concerned that the potential for serious environmental damage exists from extraction of natural gas by hydraulic fracturing (also called 'fracking') and request a one-year moratorium on the issuance of new permits. Moratoriums are currently in place in Arkansas and New York State. Other governmental bodies, both here and abroad, are considering how to deal with this technology and additional moratoriums are possible.

It is argued that 'fracking' is a long-established technology that has been safely utilized for many years. One could have made the same statement about offshore oil drilling before last summer's disaster. Here was a technology that went further and further, deeper and deeper, until disaster happened on the Gulf. This is the same trend that is being followed by fracking, by extending its use to deeper and deeper gas deposits.

There have been sufficient examples of serious fracking-caused environmental damage to warrant a moratorium. Several studies are being conducted on the national level (EPA) and state level (e.g., Pennsylvania State University). When these studies are concluded, they should provide guidance on the dangers and recommendations for safe extraction of natural gas. Any gas that exists deep under the good earth of Ohio has been there for millions of years. There is no current shortage of natural gas. Waiting a year will not do any harm and may do much good, because we will be armed with greater knowledge.

We appreciate your attention to this request.

Sincerely,

Meg Flack, PhD President,

League of Women Voters of Ohio

## Appendix C: Request for Selective Injection Well Ban

January 18, 2012

Mr. James Zehringer, Director  
Ohio Department of Natural Resources 2045 Morse RD., Bldg. D Columbus OH 43229-6693

Dear Mr. Zehringer:

The 11 earthquakes experienced last year in the Youngstown area have been attributed to hydraulic fracturing waste deposited in an injection well located in the vicinity of a sub-surface fault. Won-Young Kim, a research professor of Seismology Geology at Columbia University, advising Ohio on the Dec. 31 earthquake, said circumstantial evidence suggests a link between the earthquake and high-pressure liquid injection related to oil and gas exploration and production. (Hannah News Service, 1/10/12).

We applaud your decisions to drain the well and undertake a detailed investigation. But this earthquake cluster should not have been a surprise; in the past 30 years there have been two earthquake clusters in Northeast Ohio attributed to injection wells (Cleveland and Ashtabula areas). In addition Marietta experienced several earthquakes last year of unknown origin; it may be relevant that Washington County has approximately nine injection wells, which may have led to the earthquakes there. Strong evidence exists that injection wells have triggered earthquakes in at least five other states since the year 2000. It appears that such deep-well disposal of chemically-laden wastewater is potentially hazardous.

We believe this situation requires strong action. Accordingly, we request that the Ohio Department of Natural Resources institute a ban on use of injection wells located near critical infrastructure, such as pipelines, bridges, and dams, as well as heavily-populated areas. We note that the same recommendation has been made by the West Virginia State Geologist.

The ban should remain in place until there is a comprehensive map of faults in Ohio. Clearly reducing the funding for the ODNR Division of Geological Survey by 1/3 has hindered our ability to guard against earthquakes. From ignorance, an injection well close to another previously-unknown fault could lead to more earthquakes.

We appreciate your consideration of this request.  
Very truly yours,

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Nancy G. Brown, Co-President    Meg Flack, Co-President