

PA Environment Digest

An Update On Environmental Issues In PA

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Winner 2009 [PAEE Business Partner](#) Of The Year Award

Harrisburg, Pa

October 1, 2012

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Sen. Scarnati Working On Marcellus Shale Health Advisory Panel Bill

Sen. Joe Scarnati (R-Jefferson) [circulated a memo](#) to members of the Senate this week announcing his intent to develop legislation to create a Marcellus Shale Health Advisory Panel.

The panel, he said, would “be tasked with thoroughly investigating and studying advancements in science, technology and public health data in order to provide Pennsylvania elected officials, regulators and the general public with information, analysis and recommendations regarding the safe, efficient and environmentally responsible extraction and use of unconventional natural gas reserves in the Commonwealth.”

Sen. Scarnati noted, “There has been much discussion regarding the potential effects of Marcellus Shale drilling on public health and safety. The creation of an advisory panel composed of experts from a wide range of fields including doctors, scientists, academics and industry leaders will provide Pennsylvania with a critical asset in addressing any current or future impacts arising from the development of Marcellus Shale.”

The creation of a permanent health advisory panel was a suggestion of the [Governor’s Marcellus Shale Advisory Commission](#) he explained.

In fact, the language used by Sen. Scarnati to describe his proposal advisory panel was very close to the recommendation in the Commission report--

“In recognition of the tremendous breadth and scope of issues affected by Marcellus Shale natural gas, as well as the significant pace of technology and best management practice advancements occurring within the industry, the Commission strongly encourages Governor Corbett to consider creating a permanent advisory panel or committee to monitor the impacts of this industry, thoroughly investigate advancements in science, public health data and technology, and provide the Commonwealth’s elected officials, policymakers, regulators and members of the public with real-time information, analysis and recommendations regarding the safe, efficient and environmentally responsible extraction and use of unconventional natural gas reserves in Pennsylvania.”

The Commission also recommended the Commonwealth establish a health registry to track the any impacts drilling was having around well sites-- “The Department of Health should

create, or oversee the creation of, a population-based health registry with the purpose of characterizing and following over time individuals who live in close proximity (i.e. one mile radius) to gas drilling and production sites.”

Sen. John Yudichak (D-Luzerne), Minority Chair of the Senate Environmental Resources and Energy Committee, proposed supporting the creation of a health registry as part of his drilling fee proposal in [Senate Bill 1519](#).

He said he would propose a panel consisting of nine members including the Secretary of Health and individuals appointed by the Governor, President Pro Tempore of the Senate, Speaker of the House and House and Senate Minority Leaders.

Sen. Scarnati led the effort to establish a responsible drilling fee and additional environmental protection standards during both the Rendell and Corbett Administrations.

A copy of Sen. Scarnati’s memo [is available online](#).

NewsClips: [Sen. Scarnati Proposing Shale Health Advisory Panel](#)
[Top Republican Floats Proposal For Marcellus Health Panel](#)
[Editorial: Independently Assess Drilling Impact On Health](#)