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MASSACHUSETTS CHAPTER

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## **Regulate Gas Obtained by Fracking**

*Formal Title: An Act Related to Hydraulic Fracturing*

*Sponsor: Rep. Sean Garballey*

*House Contact: Dave Koffman, 617-722-2090 david.koffman@mahouse.gov;*

*Previously filed as H3055*

### **This bill would:**

- Require energy utilities that generate electricity in Massachusetts from natural gas to disclose the chemicals that their suppliers used during the natural-gas extraction process.
- It would also require them to certify that the process did not contaminate any drinking water.

### **Background**

More than half of Massachusetts' electricity (52.9%) and 40% of our residential heating comes from natural gas extracted using hydraulic fracturing, described below. The gas is piped into the state from the Gulf coast, western New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Canada as well as other foreign sources.

Hydraulic fracturing (fracking) is the process of creating fractures in underground shale rock formations that contain natural gas. Energy/drilling companies use it to extract gas in 90% of U.S. wells. The drillers then force highly pressurized water containing sand and a cocktail of chemical additives into the rock to cause it to break up. The natural gas flows out of the rock and is pumped to the surface along with the chemical/wastewater solution. The gas is retrieved and the wastewater, up to a million gallons per mining event, is stored in pools, released to the environment, or trucked to wastewater plants. The wastewater may also be recycled in another drilling event but will eventually be treated the same as the above wastewater, but with increasingly more concentrated contaminants every time it is reused.

Toxic chemicals that are used in this process seep into ground, polluting aquifers, surface waters, and eventually the surrounding air. These chemicals can include known carcinogens, highly toxic chemicals, and unknown compounds.

Fracking used to be subject to the requirements of the federal Safe Drinking Water Act but was exempted in 2005 during the Bush-Cheney Administration, known as the Halliburton Exemption. This placed the burden of regulation back on the states, many of which have faced the difficult choice of regulating an industry that provides large numbers of jobs and income but spews poisons and pollution in the process.

This bill seeks to close the loophole created by that exemption by using state law as legislators did in Colorado and Wyoming.