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Senate of Pennsylvania

VETERANS AFFAIRS & EMERGENCY
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APPROPRIATIONS
ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES &
ENERGY
PUBLIC HEALTH & WELFARE

July 20, 2010

The Honorable Edward G. Rendell
Main Capitol Building
Room 225
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Governor Rendell:

In northeastern Pennsylvania, we are dealing daily with the challenges of finding the right balance between environmental protection and economic benefit in regard to gas drilling in the Marcellus Shale.

In response to community concerns in the wake of the well blowout in Clearfield County, the Senate Veterans Affairs and Emergency Management Committee held a public hearing into our state of readiness for dealing with the inevitable problems.

We found a number of dismaying deficiencies in company actions. The investigation commissioned by the Department of Environmental Protection provided an even more complete picture of the shortcomings that contributed to what might have been a disastrous situation.

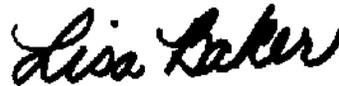
Clearly, one of the most troubling aspects was the company's reliance on Texas-based experts to deal with problems. The delay inherent in long distance response is unacceptable when the risks are so high and time is so vital. Given the number of wells being drilled, and the expectation for many more to come, we must insist that the companies have Pennsylvania-based experts ready to respond to these types of emergency situations.

If this requirement can happen through some form of administrative action, then it is in the public interest to do so. If a change in law is needed to accomplish this, I will be happy to work with you and Secretary Hanger to attain it.

On a more positive note, the response from PEMA and local responder groups at our hearing was encouraging. As my conversations with local personnel in the district have reinforced, they are in most instances better trained and better prepared to deal with accidents and emergencies than some critics have suggested.

As the issues involved in gas drilling have come into focus, your administration has responded in appropriate and timely fashion to requests for information and action, and this level of cooperation is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lisa Baker". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lisa Baker
State Senator

LB/elc

PC: Secretary John Hanger
Secretary Robert French