

Republicans Lead Fight to Ban Fracking in Florida

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A drilling rig sits on a field near Coal Ridge Middle School in Firestone, Colorado on July 8, 2013. (Stephanie Davis/MCT)

Today March 20, 2017 the [Orlando Sentinel](#) ran an Associated Press article about the push to ban fracking in Florida. We have had a turnaround since last year, when many Republicans supported fracking. You can see the original article at this [link](#).

Comments by OSFR historian Jim Tatum.

-A river is like a life: once taken, it cannot be brought back-

[.](#)
Republicans lead fight to ban fracking in Florida

Associated PressOrlando Sentinel

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (AP) – Citing unresolved health concerns, Florida lawmakers are weighing the fate of a measure that would ban fracking across the state.

Legislators are pushing the bill to safeguard Florida’s clean water supply, which is the drinking water source for 90 percent of Floridians and a major player in the state’s economy, from agriculture to tourism.

If passed, the bill would effectively ban any type of well stimulation technique statewide. That includes fracking – a practice that requires pumping huge volumes of chemicals, sand and water underground to split open rock formation to allow oil and gas to flow.

Environmentalists say chemicals used in the process can leak into underground water sources. Because Florida sits atop porous, sponge-like sedimentary limestone, environmentalists believe it is at a higher risk of chemical leaks.

The Environmental Protection Agency concluded in 2016 that fracking poses a risk to drinking water in some circumstances, but added that a lack of information on the practice makes it hard to know how severe that risk would be.

Those opposing the measure argue the fracking ban could cost the state, litigation-wise, because it would result in taking away property rights and the ability to extract oil.

“The bill does nothing to foreclose the traditional oil and gas

operations that we currently have here in the state of Florida, and we currently – at least to our knowledge – are not fracking the state,” Sen. Dana Young, the bill’s sponsor, said at a press conference.

The legislation comes at a time when the anti-fracking movement has ballooned across the state. According to a Floridians Against Fracking report, 90 communities have introduced measures seeking to ban the practice in one way or another. Young joined the momentum not too long ago. Last year, she helped advance a bill in the House that would have created a pathway to legalizing the practice, but the measure died in the [Senate](#).

Young said her stance changed after meeting with stakeholders and “exhausting hours of research and soul-searching.”

On day one of the 60-day legislative session, Environmental Preservation and Conservation Committee members advanced this year’s bill. It now has two more stops before heading to the full Senate. While Senate President [Joe Negron](#) has vowed to make the environment one of his priorities, he has not taken a firm stance on the ban.

A similar bill moving to prohibit fracking has been introduced in the House. While it has received support from Democrats, the bill’s sponsor, Rep. Mike Miller, is the only Republican backing it.

“I would hope that Florida is a leader in this regard, and considering we are a diverse state and a swing state, purple through and through, we hope and expect the country will be looking at us,” said Aliko Moncrief, executive director of Florida Conservation Voters.

State legislators in Maryland and Nevada are also considering a ban on fracking this year. Vermont and New York are currently

the only states with an outright ban on the practice.

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