

DeGette ‘fracking’ amendment doesn’t fly; ExxonMobil shareholders vote

By [David O. Williams](#) 5/26/10 4:26 PM

Colorado Rep. Diana DeGette’s [bid to get full public disclosure of the chemicals used in the hydraulic fracturing](#) of natural gas wells was withdrawn as an amendment to a Safe Drinking Water Act bill Wednesday after debate by the House Energy and Commerce Committee.

The committee passed the [“Assistance, Quality, and Affordability Act of 2010 \(pdf\),”](#) which amends the Safe Drinking Water Act to increase funding to states, water systems and “disadvantaged communities,” step up EPA enforcement and encourage better environmental and financial management of water systems, among other things. But the committee did not accept DeGette’s hydraulic fracturing amendment.

Hydraulic fracturing is the widely used process of injecting water, sand and undisclosed chemicals under high pressure into natural gas wells to fracture tight formations and free up more gas. Critics in Colorado and elsewhere are concerned it can lead to contamination of groundwater supplies, and DeGette wants to remove a 2005 exemption for the process under the Safe Drinking Water Act.

As the Safe Drinking Water Act bill moves through Congress, environmentalists want to see the hydraulic fracturing issue revisited.

“Congress has an opportunity to address the growing threats to our drinking water coming from dangerous gas drilling practices. We encourage our representatives in Congress to make certain that drilling for natural gas does not come at the expense of our drinking water. And we support all efforts to make sure that toxic chemicals aren’t coming out of our taps,” Piper Crowell, Clean Water Advocate for Environment America, said in a release.

In other hydraulic fracturing, or fracking news, investors holding 26.3 percent of the stock of ExxonMobil – set to become the nation’s largest natural gas producer with the acquisition of XTO Energy – supported a proposal asking the company to disclose fracking chemicals.

Put forth by the shareholder advocacy group [“As You Sow,”](#) which holds nearly 17,000 ExxonMobil shares, the proposal received five times the usual level of support for a first-time environmental resolution put forth to the board of a major energy company, according to the group.

“Today’s vote sent a strong message to ExxonMobil that shareholders are concerned about how it is dealing with hydraulic fracturing, especially in light of the expansion that will make it the nation’s largest natural gas company,” As You Sow’s Michael Passoff said in a release.