

PUBLICATION

Florida Considers Competing Bills Regarding Hydraulic Fracturing

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A regulatory framework for hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, currently does not exist in Florida. Actually, neither does fracking itself, but both of those things could change soon. The State Affairs Committee passed a controversial bill proposed by republican representatives, Ray Rodrigues and Cary Pigman, regulating fracking, and it is on its way to the House floor.

If enacted, the bill would define fracking, require a permit to conduct fracking and require companies to specify that they will employ the fracking technique upfront [as opposed to acquiring a drilling permit and then simply notifying the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP)]. It will also issue a moratorium on fracking while the FDEP conducts a study on fracking's impact on groundwater, the possible use of recycled water and the disposal of used fluids.

Anti-fracking activists are against the bill, describing it as a Trojan Horse, and arguing that the proposed regulatory framework will only increase fracking in the state. Business groups, like the Florida Chamber of Commerce and the Florida Petroleum Council, support the bill, citing the potential jobs that will be created by the oil and gas industry. Environmentalists, however, emphasize their concerns about the state's freshwater supply and possible risks to residents' health and Florida's tourism and agriculture sectors.

On the opposite end of the political spectrum, Florida democratic senators, Darren Soto and Dwight Bullard, have reintroduced a bill to ban fracking and well stimulation treatments, such as acid fracturing. The bill has been referred to multiple committees in the Senate.