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FIRST AMENDMENT TO
THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for redress of grievances."

Editorial

N.Y. only gets one chance on fracking

Most recent delay necessary to ensure full review

Word that New York would miss a regulatory deadline for filing proposed rules on hydraulic fracturing was, predictably, booed by many landowners and gas industry officials. Their frustration is understandable, but it's also beside the point. State leaders get only

one chance to review the controversial gas-drilling method; they need to get it right, no matter how long the process takes.

The latest delay stems from ongoing assessments of the state's guidelines in terms of possible health impacts. The state's health commissioner is reviewing the Department of Environmental Conservation's plan, and that review will be further vetted by three outside health experts. All of this

will push the process into next year, well past a Nov. 29 deadline, potentially reopening the entire review process to new public hearings and comment.

Gas industry leaders, citing a review that has stretched into its fifth year, say enough is enough. They maintain thousands of jobs that would be created by gas drilling in the Marcellus Shale are hanging fire.

But there are other jobs to consider: Those in agricul-

ture, tourism and related industries dependent on western New York's aquifers and other natural resources.

Hydrofracking requires pumping huge volumes of chemically treated water deep underground at high pressure to release natural gas from shale, a process not without potential environmental risks. The DEC must ensure its guidelines minimize such risks — not only for the health of existing industries but tens of thou-

sands of residents. It must also require proper response to mitigate any accidents. The reviews being conducted by health experts will help it do just that.

Eagerness on the part of the gas industry, and property owners willing to lease their land for drilling, isn't surprising. But New York won't get a second chance to put the proper procedures in place should it greenlight hydrofracking. Time is not of the essence; accuracy is.