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# Democrat and Chronicle

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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

# High stakes justify fracking regs delay

Potential health impacts must be fully reviewed

Word Tuesday that a continuing review of potential health effects related to hydraulic fracturing in New York will delay implementation of industry regulations was met with predictable displeasure by fracking proponents. That's understandable, but beside the point. All

potential negative effects from the controversial gas-drilling method must be fully reviewed before the state moves forward.

Frustration is not surprising. The review has now stretched some four and a half years. In the interim, other states have reaped the financial rewards of extracting natural gas from the Marcellus Shale, which stretches under New York's Southern Tier.

While the jobs and related

economic benefits of hydraulic fracturing would be welcome, risks need to be thoroughly understood and, to the extent possible, mitigated.

Those risks may be substantial. Opponents point to the damage wastewater from the process could do were it to find its way into underground aquifers or the region's Finger Lakes, which provide drinking water for hundreds of thousands, including in Rochester. But even everyday operations

may have side effects. Some health experts say ozone released in the process could endanger those living near drilling sites.

All of which is no doubt why State Health Commissioner Nirav Shah, charged with reviewing potential health impacts of hydraulic fracturing, said he'd need more time to complete his study. He's wise not to let himself be pressured into a hasty decision.

Meantime, while the De-

partment of Environmental Conservation must await Shah's findings before issuing its final report, DEC chief Joe Martens suggested Tuesday the agency might begin issuing drilling permits anyway. Bad call. That would be a premature move that invites legal challenge.

The stakes are too high to abandon due diligence at this point. The state must have all reviews — and assurances — in place before green-lighting hydrofracking.