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"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."

FIRST AMENDMENT TO
THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION

Editorial

Due diligence on hydrofracking in N.Y.

DEC correct to take its time on weighty decision

A long-awaited decision on whether to allow hydraulic fracturing in New York will be delayed while the state reviews potential public health effects. That may be disappointing to gas industry interests, who have seen the review process stretch over four years, but

state leaders need not apologize for doing their due diligence.

After all, hydrofracking, or "fracking," has the potential to affect not only the state's economy and jobs market for the better, but its environment, infrastructure and public health for the worse. The state Department of Environmental Conservation — the agency spearheading the review — has to get this one right.

That means not only de-

ciding whether to give gas drillers the green light but, if so, how to monitor the practice, manage the process and mitigate the threats.

It is those threats — critics warn of contaminated drinking water and air pollution — that lead even towns unlikely to see fracking activity, like Brighton and Perinton, to pass local laws opposing the practice.

Such public health concerns also led to state DEC Commissioner Joseph Mar-

tens' Sept. 20 announcement that the state's health commissioner will assess the DEC's analysis of hydrofracking health effects. That drew frowns from fracking opponents, who wanted an independent analysis, and from gas companies (and land owners with drilling leases), who want a final decision.

But as Gov. Andrew Cuomo correctly argues, there should be no "artificial deadline."

There has been no lack of data for the DEC to consider, from industry reports, to first-hand accounts in states like Pennsylvania where hydrofracking is underway, to tens of thousands of public comments. A rushed review process would have been irresponsible.

Supporters and foes of hydrofracking won't agree on the DEC's ultimate decision. But all should agree it was the result of a thorough and deliberate process.