



With a 103-36 vote in the House of Representatives, Vermont on Friday became the first state to ban hydraulic fracturing to extract oil or natural gas. The bill passed the Senate earlier this week.

The House debate was short. Heidi Scheuermann, R-Stowe, raised concerns that Vermont was banning the practice without knowing what natural gas resources it was giving up. “We have no idea if some farmers in Franklin County might be able to take advantage of an economic opportunity on their property,” she said in floor debate. Scheuermann urged the House to vote for a moratorium, which would sunset after a number of years.

David Deen, D-Westminster, argued that there was a small “semantic difference” between a ban and a moratorium, since no legislature can bind a future legislature. “If we put a ban in place at this time, by this time next year, that ban could either be a moratorium or lifted.”

Rep. Anne Donahue, R-Northfield, raised different questions. If Vermont is the first state to pass a fracking ban, she wanted to know about the possibility of the state being sued to overturn the law. She asked about grounds for challenging the bill’s constitutionality, either under the Interstate Commerce Clause or the Supremacy Clause.

TVNL Comment: ☐ One down, forty-nine to go! ☐ Every state in the nation MUST ban fracking and stop this dangerous practice before it’s too late!

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