

January 10, 2012
Representative Ron Miller
Remarks to House Consumer Affairs Committee regarding HB 1855

Thank you Mr. Chairman for holding this hearing on HB 1855.

HB 1855 provides the statutory authority authorizing the Environmental Quality Board to establish water well construction standards through the adoption of rules and regulations of the DEP that are generally consistent with the National Groundwater Association construction standards. The EQB regulatory process averages about two years during which input from various stake holders and associations will be received.

Some 20,000 new water wells are drilled each year in Pennsylvania, but the Commonwealth is one of the few states without private well regulations. More than 3 million Pennsylvanians rely on about 1 million private wells for drinking water. Improperly constructed water wells can lead to poor water quality by providing pathways for bacteria and contaminants such as naturally occurring shallow methane gas to migrate into water supplies. Ensuring that the well is constructed properly from the start will help to prevent water quality problems in the future.

Establishing water well construction standards is an important component of the Commonwealth's water resource protection program. Specifically, two independent statewide advisory committees have made strong recommendations to do so. On December 18, 2008, the Statewide Water Resources Committee reported its top legislative recommendation was to "...establish statewide private water well construction standards." On July 22, 2011, the Marcellus Shale Commission issued its recommendations which are included on page 108; "The Commonwealth should enact legislation establishing construction standards for new private water wells to ensure the delivery of safe drinking water to its residents

To avoid any confusion upfront; the proposed legislation would merely establish construction standards, including the decommissioning of abandoned wells, to be followed by water well drillers and owners. Nothing in this legislation requires the metering of homeowner wells. In fact, Section 3118 (b) (f) of Act 220 or 2002, known as the Water Resource Planning Act, specifically prohibits DEP or EQB from requiring the metering of homeowner wells.

Thank you again to the committee for considering this legislation and I look forward to the testimony of others regarding HB 1855.