



# Susquehanna

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## Grant Township, PA, Passes Community Bill of Rights, Bans Fracking Injection Wells

On June 3rd, the Grant Township Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to adopt a Community Bill of Rights Ordinance prohibiting the disposal of fracking waste material into injection wells. CELDF is working with growing numbers of Pennsylvania communities that are increasingly threatened by injection wells, which endanger drinking water and local aquifers, and have been linked with earthquakes in neighboring Ohio. The CELDF-drafted Ordinance secures community rights to local self-governance, and clean air and water, by banning injection wells as a violation of those rights.

*(Grant - pg. 2)*

## Lawsuit Filed in Colorado to Overturn Oil and Gas Act as Unconstitutional

CELDf assisted Lafayette, CO, residents to file a first-of-its-kind class action lawsuit against the State of Colorado, Governor John Hickenlooper, and the Colorado Oil and Gas Association. The lawsuit was filed to protect the rights of the people of Lafayette to self-governance, including their right to ban fracking.

In November 2013, after working with CELDF to protect the city from fracking, residents of Lafayette overwhelmingly adopted a Home Rule Charter Amendment banning all new commercial extraction of natural gas and oil within the City limits. The CELDF-drafted Amendment established a Community Bill of Rights - including the right of human and natural communities to water and a healthy environment. The Bill of Rights bans fracking and other extraction as a violation of those rights.

In December, the Colorado Oil and Gas Association filed a lawsuit against the City of Lafayette to overturn the Community Bill of Rights.

*(Lawsuit- pg. 3)*

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## *(Grant - from pg. 1)*

Lawyers from Pennsylvania General Energy Company (PGE) - the corporation that wants to inject the waste - arrived at the meeting before the ordinance was passed. They threatened to sue the community for infringing on their corporate "rights." Not intimidated by PGE's threats, folks in Grant Township affirmed that their right to determine the future of their community is greater than PGE's claimed right to inject toxic waste into their community. As Grant Township resident Judy Wanchisn said after the vote, "Water is our most precious resource, and if we don't take action to protect it for our community and for future generations, who will?"

For more information, contact Chad Nicholson at [chad@celdf.org](mailto:chad@celdf.org).

## Oregon: Pesticides and GMOS

### PESTICIDES BEWARE

Since 2013, residents in Josephine County have been working with CELDF on the issue of toxic pesticide use. That collaboration has lead to a petitioning effort to qualify a Freedom from Pesticides Bill of Rights Ordinance for the November 2014 ballot. The Bill of Rights, drafted by CELDF, would protect their rights to clean air, soil, and water, and ban the most toxic of pesticides in Josephine County.

In June, through a partnered effort between the Freedom from Pesticides Alliance (the sponsors of the initiative), the Oregon Community Rights Network, and CELDF, there was a one-day petitioning blitz: Signatures were gathered at multiple locations across the County, including a regional fair. With two-thirds of the required signatures gathered to date, the group expects to reach their goal of 3,000 signatures (2,000 are needed to qualify). Signatures are due August 6th.

For more information, contact the Freedom from Pesticides Alliance at [www.freedomfrompesticidesalliance.org](http://www.freedomfrompesticidesalliance.org)

### GMOS TAKE CENTER STAGE

**Benton County** – The Benton County Community Rights Coalition (BCCRC) has been in partnership with CELDF for almost two years, building grassroots organizing to protect the County from GMOs, and navigating County



government and corporate legal hurdles to advance the Benton County Local Food System Ordinance. In January 2014, the Ordinance received approval for petitioning to be on the November 2014 ballot.

The petitioning committee for the BCCRC, known as Benton Food Freedom, is out in force gathering signatures and support for their CELDF-drafted Local Food System Ordinance. The Ordinance protects the right to seed heritage and nature's rights, while prohibiting GMO food production in Benton County.

For more information, contact the Benton County Community Rights Coalition at [www.bentonccrc.org](http://www.bentonccrc.org)

**Lane County** - Lane County has a similar CELDF assisted effort underway through Support Local Food Rights, which is the political group of Community Rights Lane County.

As happened in Benton County, the state's largest agribusiness lobbyist groups as well as the County government itself have been throwing up procedural roadblocks to deter the group from moving forward with their petitioning effort.

This has forced the group to rewrite their ordinance multiple times, having re-filed most recently on June 6th in order to comply with a judge's decision in March.

Although the group expects the County and possibly corporate interests to be non-cooperative, requiring another trip to court, the group continues their education, outreach, and coalition building in partnership with CELDF, aiming for the May 2015 ballot.

For more information, contact the Community Rights Lane County at [www.communityrightslanecounty.org](http://www.communityrightslanecounty.org) or see Banning GMOs: The New Civil Rights Movement at [www.eugeneweekly.com/article/banning-gmos](http://www.eugeneweekly.com/article/banning-gmos).

### *(Lawsuit - from pg. 1)*

The association contends that the community does not have the legal authority to protect itself from fracking, and that corporate members of the association have the constitutional "right" to frack.

In filing the class action lawsuit, the residents of Lafayette argue that the Colorado Oil and Gas Act, and the industry's enforcement of the Act, violate the constitutional right of residents of the community to local self-government.

For more information, contact Ben Price at [benprice@celdf.org](mailto:benprice@celdf.org).

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## Join Our Listserve

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**Contact Stacey  
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Visit Our Website:  
[www.celdf.org](http://www.celdf.org).

## CELDF Announces Board of Advisors

This spring, CELDF launched its Board of Advisors. The Board of Advisors is comprised of well-known and visionary environmentalists, filmmakers, writers, entrepreneurs, and attorneys who have dedicated their lives to preserve Earth's communities through environmental and social justice. Board members include:

**Kenny Ausubel**, CEO and Co-Founder, Bioneers (NM)

**Spencer Beebe**, Founder, Ecotrust (OR)

**Anneke Campbell**, Writer, producer, and activist (CA)

**Leila Conners**, Tree Media (CA)

**Josh Fox**, Director, Gasland (NY)

**Jerry Greenfield**, Co-founder, Ben & Jerry's (VT)

**Randy Hayes**, Founder, Rainforest Action Network (Washington, D.C.)

**Derrick Jensen**, Author, Endgame and A Language Older than Words (CA)

**Jeremy Kagan**, Filmmaker (CA)

**Winona LaDuke**, White earth reservation anishinaabe akiing

**Jules Lobel**, President, Center for Constitutional Rights

**Jim Sheehan**, Founder, Center for Justice (WA)

**Douglas Shields**, President and Member, Pittsburgh City Council (2004 – 2011) (PA)

**John Stauber**, Founder, Center for Media and Democracy (WI)

**Bill Twist**, President, The Pachamama Alliance (CA)

CELDF welcomes our Board of Advisors!

## Washington: Tackling Inequality In Spokane

Envision Spokane continues to partner with CELDF in both contesting a lower court's removal of their duly-qualified Community Bill of Rights from the November 2013 ballot, and building towards a new initiative effort. New energy is coalescing on using Community Rights to tackle inequality with a focus on worker rights and the right to a local economy.

The group is actively meeting with labor union locals, community groups, and the general public to discuss the formulation of a new CELDF-drafted rights-based initiative for Spokane. A drafting committee will convene later in the summer with plans to launch the initiative effort in the fall.

For more information on Envision Spokane go to [www.envisionspokane.org](http://www.envisionspokane.org).

## Highland Township, PA Hosts Gathering

On June 21, residents of Highland Township, PA, hosted a community-wide gathering to build support for their ongoing effort to secure clean water for their community.

Calling it a "Highland Township Residents Fight for Clean Water Picnic," the day included workshops and speeches given by community members and CELDF staff. Close to 100 people attended from ten counties, and as far away as Ohio, standing in solidarity with Highland residents.



Last year, CELDF assisted the Highland Township Supervisors as they passed a Community Bill of Rights Ordinance banning injection wells, similar to Grant Township's recently adopted Ordinance (see related article on page 1). Since that time, Seneca Resources - the corporation that wants to inject the wastewater - has threatened to sue the community to overturn the Ordinance.

In the face of these threats, Highland Township residents have continued to organize support, both within the community and beyond. Out of these efforts, a new community group emerged: the Highland Township Citizens Advocating a Clean Healthy Environment (CACHE). Activities such as the Clean Water Picnic are part of their efforts to continue building support, which has resulted in numerous



*Picnic cakes photo by Wendy Lynn Lee*

groups from around the state pledging their support to the community.

The picnic was co-sponsored by a number of local, regional, and

state-wide groups, including CELDF and the Pennsylvania Community Rights Network. It was a picnic to protect rights - and the fun is only just beginning!

## Community Rights Papers: a Series on Inalienable Rights

For almost two decades, CELDF has been working with communities across the country to assert their inalienable rights: rights to clean air and water, rights

to a sustainable food and energy future, rights to local decision-making, and rights of nature.

We've come to call them Community Rights. They're rights that many communities assumed they had - until they tried to stop a harm, and found out they couldn't.

From shale gas drilling and fracking, to factory farming and genetically modified seed, to coal mining and mountain top removal, corporate activities and the governments that permit them are trampling on communities' rights. Their clean air and water, and their food and energy futures, are threatened. When residents take steps to protect themselves and local ecosystems, corporations and governments inform them they have no right to do so.

Today, communities across the country are saying "No more!" A grassroots Community Rights Movement is emerging out of CELDF's work with local municipalities across the United States. More than 150 communities have adopted CELDF-drafted Community Bills of Rights, protecting their communities' rights to local self-governance, to clean air and water, the rights of nature, and rights to a sustainable future.

But where did Community Rights come from, and why do we need them?

CELDf recently launched a series of Community Rights Papers, exploring the roots of Community Rights in our history, and how they've emerged as rights movements - including our own American Revolution. We also explore how communities across the United States are defining Community Rights - and why we need Community Rights today, as evidenced by environmental catastrophes such as Love Canal.

Visit our Community Rights Papers page to read more: <http://celdf.org/community-rights-papers>.

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## Youngstown, OH Community Bill of Rights Continues to Gain at the Polls

In 2012, Youngstown, OH, residents contacted CELDF for help in protecting their community from shale gas drilling and fracking. Determining that the surest way to protect themselves was by asserting their Community Rights, they placed a CELDF-drafted Community Bill of Rights Charter Amendment banning fracking on the ballot in May 2013.

Facing opposition from local unions, elected officials, industry, the Chamber of Commerce, and even the local newspaper, the measure was defeated. Working with CELDF, residents placed it on the ballot again in November, and again this past May. Each time, they have been overwhelmingly outspent by the opposition. Despite this, they have also steadily gained at the polls.

As the community group's education and outreach grows, more and more Youngstown residents are realizing that the "jobs" they were promised are not materializing. What has materialized is earthquake damage to homes and city structures, and now a radioactive waste processing plant has been permitted within the city limits.



Today, inspired by the increasing number of votes they are obtaining with each campaign, residents are determined to join the more than 150 communities who have adopted CELDF-drafted Community Rights laws. The Community Rights group is circulating their Community Bill of Rights for the November 2014 ballot.

"We'll put it on again," said Susie Beiersdorfer, a member of the Community Bill of Rights Committee. "It doesn't matter how many times we have to fight for our inalienable rights to clean water and clean air."

For more information on CELDF's work in Ohio, contact Tish O'Dell at [tish@celdf.org](mailto:tish@celdf.org).

## Colorado Advances Community Rights

The Colorado Community Rights Network (COCRN) – a coalition of communities across the state working to advance Community Rights to the state level – has cleared the last hurdle to begin collecting signatures to place a state constitutional amendment on the ballot that would guarantee the right of citizens and local governments to enact rights-protecting laws free of state preemption or corporate challenge.

CELDF assisted the COCRN proponents of ballot initiative #75, commonly known as the Local Self-Government Amendment, to successfully navigate the measure through the state legislative review process and the state title board review. The COCRN was then hit with two corporate challenges in an attempt to block the initiative, which sent the measure back to the title board for appeal. The amendment language was approved by the board. However, yet another industry challenge sent the measure to the Colorado State Supreme Court. Finally, on May 22nd, the Court gave the green light for a vote by the people in November, once enough signatures are collected.

The ballot title designated by the State asks voters:

*Shall there be an amendment to the Colorado constitution concerning a right to local self-government, and, in connection therewith, declaring that the people have an inherent right to local self-government in counties and municipalities, including the power to enact laws to establish and protect fundamental rights of individuals, communities, and nature and the power to define or eliminate the rights and powers of corporations or business entities to prevent them from interfering with those fundamental rights; declaring that such local laws are not subject to preemption by any federal, state, or international laws so long as the local laws do not weaken any fundamental rights or protections for individuals, communities, or nature found in federal, state, or international law?*

A successful petitioning effort would place this question before Colorado voters on November 4th, 2014.

For more information, contact Ben Price at [benprice@celdf.org](mailto:benprice@celdf.org).

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