

Letter to Pennsylvania Governor Tom Wolf Demands Fracking Permit Pause, Investigation of Cancer Crisis

100+ groups, Mark Ruffalo and Bill McKibben join state reps and dozens of groups in call for action

By [Food & Water Watch](#)

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Over a hundred groups and more than 800 individuals from Pennsylvania [signed onto a letter](#) to Governor Tom Wolf calling for an official investigation into recent reports of rare cancers in counties heavily impacted by shale gas development over the last decade. The letter also calls for the governor to suspend all gas drilling permits until the investigation shows that fracking is not the cause of this emerging public health crisis.

The letter was prompted by an investigation by the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, which documented at least 46 children in four counties in southwest Pennsylvania who have suffered from rare forms of cancer since 2008– including at least 27 cases of Ewing sarcoma, a form of bone cancer that only affects between 200 and 250 people across the entire country each year.

“The Wolf administration’s approach to the impacts of shale gas development has been ‘If you don’t want to see something, don’t look,’” said Karen Feridun, co-founder of the Better Path Coalition. “There’s no better evidence of that than the fact that it took reporters to identify 46 children diagnosed with rare cancers in just four counties at the epicenter of the shale gas boom. It’s time for Governor Wolf to remove his blinders and get on top of this unfolding public health crisis.”

The letter was signed by five state representatives—Elizabeth Fiedler, Danielle Friel Otten, Sara Innamorato, Summer Lee and Chris Rabb—and national leaders in the fight against fracking, including actor Mark Ruffalo, Gasland director Josh Fox, Dr. Sandra Steingraber, actress Shailene Woodley, and 350.org founder Bill McKibben.

“We have known for years that fracking presents clear threats to our drinking water, our air quality, and to the health and safety of residents in these sacrifice zones,” said Emily Wurth, Organizing Co-Director of Food & Water Watch. “But this investigative reporting points to an even more serious and heartbreaking toll on Pennsylvanians. Governor Wolf must take immediate action to protect the health and safety of his state.”

As the letter states,

“Scientific evidence about the harmful toxic chemicals used in gas drilling and fracking activities strongly suggest a connection. Many of the chemicals used in these activities are known carcinogens and many pose a particularly high risk to children and at-risk populations. Numerous peer-reviewed public health studies have found gas drilling and fracking activities associated with low birth weight babies, birth defects, asthma and other respiratory issues, increased rates of hospitalization, and various other health impacts.”

The letter also states:

“This is a public health crisis that requires immediate and significant action.”

The organizations signing the letter include 350.org, Berks Gas Truth, Better Path Coalition, Delaware Riverkeeper Network, Food & Water Watch, Frack Action, Physicians for Social Responsibility and Southwest Environmental Health Project.

The letter will be delivered in person to Governor Wolf on Wednesday after a briefing in Harrisburg on new reports assessing the health and climate impacts of shale gas development, which will include a recap of a public meeting on the spike in cancer diagnoses in the Canon-McMillan school district.

The letter was previewed in a [report today](#) in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette.

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