

In his recent Letter to the Editor, Dan Cunningham falsely portrayed and attacked my position on a recently passed County Law. The law has been referred to as the Drinking Water Protection Law, and as the Kinder-Morgan Bill because its intent is to protect water well owners who might be negatively impacted by trench blasting that would occur if Kinder-Morgan gets all required approvals to build their proposed pipeline. Mr. Cunningham inaccurately claims the bill prohibits blasting in areas where damage to wells might occur. It does not. What it does do is shift the liability to the blaster for any damage that does occur and sets in place a process for establishing baseline data in the form of “pre” and “post” water supply analyses. All of these elements of the law are important to protect well owners and put the burden of proof on the blaster should any damage to well water occur. For these reasons I TESTIFIED IN SUPPORT OF THE LAW at the May 11 public hearing on this measure before it was passed by the Albany County Legislature.

For the sake of transparency and openness, I want to be clear that due diligence required me to examine some technical details of the proposed law as it went through several revisions. I spoke with the Bethlehem town attorney and engineers who expressed concern with some bill language. In an effort to achieve a better bill, I discussed these issues with bill advocates and publically expressed my concerns at a recent Town Board meeting and in a communication to several concerned citizens in Bethlehem and New Scotland. But I never spoke out in opposition to the proposed law or its stated purpose. Mr. Cunningham is wrong, again.

In my May 11 comments to the Albany County Legislature supporting the bill, I did state that one technical aspect of the bill should be monitored, specifically the application of the law to all blasting, not just pipeline blasting. My concern is that farmers and other small businesses might be unintentionally harmed by provisions designed with Kinder-Morgan in mind.

In addition, I stated that the bill did not go far enough by seeking only to discourage the proposed Kinder-Morgan pipeline that passes through our communities. All across New York we should not be building any new fossil fuel infrastructure such as pipelines. We need to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels, not expand it. We as a region, and the Albany County Legislature specifically, have to more aggressively support the development of energy efficiency and renewable energy alternatives. Towards this goal, I cofounded, and am a director of Solarize Albany, a group of citizens using a bulk purchase program to lower the cost of solar power for residences and small businesses throughout Albany County. To get involved, contact us at solarizealbany@gmail.com. Let's work together for cleaner water, cleaner air and a sustainable economy for all.

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