Groups Offer Suggestions For Moreland Commission

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Common Cause New York and The Fair Elections For New York campaign both want Gov. Andrew Cuomo's Moreland Commission to follow the money when it comes to political donations from pro-hydrofracking groups.

Common Cause issued a report that found pro-hydrofracking groups have contributed over $14 million to candidates and commitees from 2007 to 2013. The group's analysis claims to show that the candidates who recieved the most money have been the most vocal on the subject of allowing hydraulic fracturing in the state.

"Powerful businesses and industries which stand to benefit from fracking use campaign contributions to gain influence with their local lawmakers, candidates, and party organizations," said Susan Lerner, director of Common Cause/NY, in a statement. "We see a wide spectrum of fracking related interests taking full advantage of New York's lax campaign finance laws in the hope of a future payday if fracking is permitted."

Citizen's Union is a member of The Fair Election For New York campaign and Gotham Gazette is published by Citizen Union's sister organization Citizens Union Foundation.

Common Cause wants the Moreland Commission to look at the following issues:

1. Examine the timing of the contributions made to the top legislative recipients in relation to the introduction or discussion of fracking related bills.

2. Examine the involvement of lobbyists and bundlers relating to the contributions to the top legislative recipients.

3.Examine the circumstances of, and any conversations which took place in relation to, the donations made to the Senate and Assembly campaign committees.

The Moreland Commission was created by Cuomo after a year of major political scandal and the indictments of a number of legislators on corruption charges. But the commission is tasked with looking at the campaign finance system and the influence of money on politics.

Cuomo has faced pressure since he took office to decide whether or not to allow hydraulic fracturing in Western New York. Supporters say allowing the technique would be a major boon to the upstate economy. Detractors say the chemicals used in the fracking process can taint local water supplies and destroy the environment.

A representative from the Independent Oil and Gas Association of New York did not immedietly respond to a request for comment.

Tags: Tagged in: Andrew Cuomo Common Cause hydrofracking