

# How to Get Your Resolution Passed to **Ban Fracking**

food&waterwatch



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See our national petition at  
[www.foodandwaterwatch.org](http://www.foodandwaterwatch.org) or:





Photo courtesy of Josh Fox/Gasland

*Hydraulic fracturing for natural gas poses a direct threat to our environment. Big oil and gas companies are wreaking havoc on the environment in pursuit of profits, disregarding communities' long-term economic survival and health for short-term economic gain. We can't just regulate our way out of this mess — we need a national ban on fracking!*

*All over the country, people are working to defend their communities from fracking, but a ban on fracking won't happen without some serious organizing. One way to create national momentum on this issue is to pass local resolutions all over the country, calling for a ban on fracking. Here's a quick guide on how to do this in your community.*



## 1. Have an initial planning meeting

Before approaching members of your city council or launching your campaign, you'll want to get a core group of people together to help you work on and plan out the campaign. An initial planning meeting is a good way to bring together others interested in stopping fracking and build a core group that can work to get the resolution passed.

You can recruit people to an initial planning meeting by talking with other people you know who are concerned about fracking and representatives of organizations who might have an interest in banning fracking. You can also do more general outreach by inviting people on listservs, posting flyers in high-traffic areas and asking others to help spread the word.





## 2. Do your homework — plan a strategy

The first step to passing a resolution is doing your homework and planning a strategy. You'll need to clearly identify your goal, understand how your city council or local decision-making body works, and map out a strategy for moving the resolution forward.



### **a. Have a clear goal**

The long-term goal of our national campaign is to ban fracking. Your town or city may not have the power to do that, but a local resolution will build support for the national effort. We recommend focusing your goal on passing a resolution that calls for a national ban on fracking and also specifically bans fracking within your city or town.

### **b. Identify targets**

To pass a resolution, you will need to identify your targets — the people who have the power to give you what you want. In this case, which members of the city or town council's support do you need to get your resolution passed? Take a look at the city or town council and figure out who will be likely to support it, who will likely oppose it and who may be undecided. How many votes do you need to pass it? Are there key members whom others listen to and have the power to move something like this? Does the mayor have a vote on the council just like any other member, or does he or she have the power to veto a resolution if it is passed?

### **c. Take stock of your resources**

Who is in your core group and what resources do they bring? Who has relationships with members of the council? Who has special skills like graphic design or video? Are there representatives of other organizations, and if so, how many members do they have? Could they help with things like getting people to key meetings? How much money can people put towards flyers or petitions? Who has time, — and how much time — to put into the campaign?

### **d. Identify allies and opponents, if any, and their power**

Your initial meeting is just a starting place. You'll want to think about other individuals and organizations that might help you. Think particularly about who might have some power or influence with council members you've identified as targets. You'll want to think about what these potential allies' interests are — why they would care about your campaign and what they might bring to the campaign, as well as who from your group will contact them.

Also think about any potential opponents. Who might oppose the resolution, what power do they have over your targets and what might they do to fight the resolution? Think about what arguments they might make to council members and how you would respond to them. Food & Water Watch is creating a list of frequently asked questions to help with this.

### **e. Map out an initial timeline**

Your campaign will evolve over time, but you should map out an initial timeline with specific goals to hold yourself and your core group accountable and to make sure your plans are realistic and achievable. A sample campaign timeline is attached. Make sure to not take everything on yourself. A campaign will be much more fun and successful if work is spread out among several people, with each person taking the lead on different aspects of the campaign.



## 3. Initial tactic: Outreach

You'll need to do outreach to demonstrate widespread support for a ban on fracking in your community. This outreach can take two forms: organizations and individuals.

### **a. Organizations**

Organized groups can help demonstrate a broader base of support because they represent larger numbers of people. Create a short letter addressed to the city council urging a ban on fracking, then talk with representatives of organizations and businesses you think will support your campaign and ask them to sign on to the letter. This will give you a document listing influential supporters that you can share with city council members to demonstrate widespread support for the ban. It will also give you a list of groups you can invite into your campaign and who can help publicize council hearings to their members and come to meetings with council members.

### **b. Individuals**

You will also want to get large numbers of individuals to support your campaign. Create a petition in support of a ban that includes space for names, addresses, emails and phone numbers. Collect petition signatures when you talk with groups, meet people at farmers' markets or in front of grocery stores, or go to other community gatherings. Set goals for yourselves and remember to gather signatures of people who will be relevant to the targets. (If there is one council member you think you need to persuade, make sure to gather more signatures from his or her district.) After collecting petition signatures, call or email the people who signed it and invite them to get involved in the campaign and take action. Calling is always better, but if you only have an email address, of course use that. You can also reach people by having house parties to talk about the issue or screening the documentary *Gasland* to educate and inspire people to get involved and take action.



## 4. Tactic: Meeting with elected officials

To get something passed, you need to engage your targets — the decision makers who can make the resolution happen. However, it is best to wait until after you build support for the campaign before talking with your targets. If you've got strong support for your resolution, you will be able to make a stronger ask and your elected representatives will be more likely to give you what you want. Remember, elected officials are ultimately accountable to the voters who elected them. If you have a strong enough group and enough individuals and organizations supporting the ban, it will be much harder for them to say no.

### **a. Identify a sponsor and make a strong ask**

Who you want to sponsor your resolution depends on a lot of factors. The best sponsor will be someone who is strongly supportive

of a ban on fracking and has good relationships with other members of the council. It's bad news if the sponsor is someone who has alienated his or her peers, which may make getting others to support the resolution more difficult. Similarly, you want someone who will be with you on the issues and not likely to make a compromise without including you.

The best way to get your target to sponsor your legislation is to make a strong ask. When you meet with your target, don't do it alone. Bring a couple of lead organizational supporters who have some power in the council member's district — people who might have helped deliver votes in the member's last election or have significant membership in the district. Also, make sure to bring your coalition letter and copies of the petitions you've gathered. An elected

official is much more likely to take you seriously when you can demonstrate you represent a significant number of people.

When you make your ask, be direct and polite. If you've done your homework and identified a member who is supportive, this should be an easy ask. Give them a copy of the resolution you want introduced, get his or her commitment to introduce it, and talk with the member about when the resolution will be brought for a hearing and vote. You should also ask his or her opinion about other council members — where they might stand and whether he or she can talk with them about supporting the ban fracking resolution.

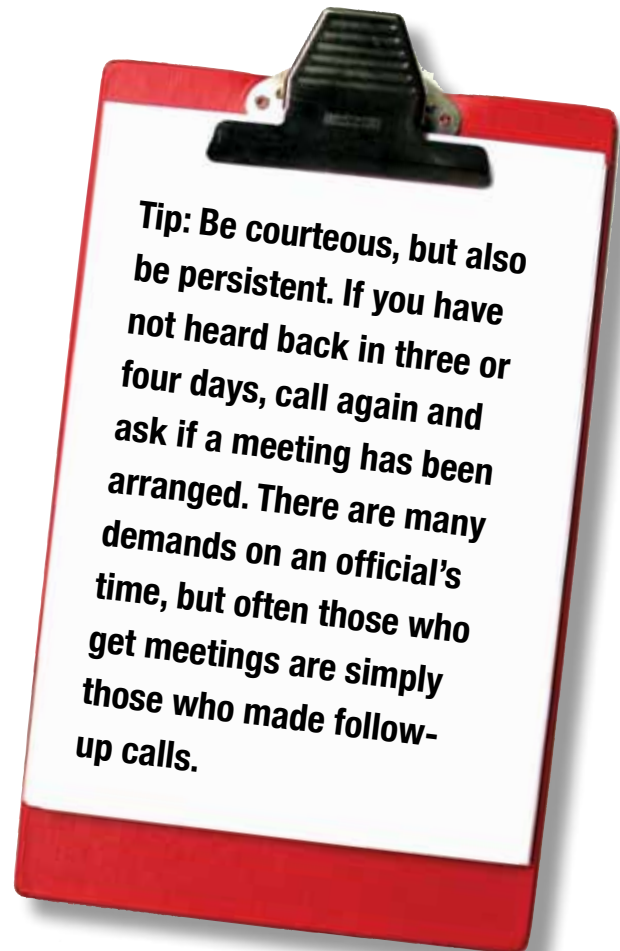
### ***b. Meeting with other members***

After you have a council member to introduce the bill, you will want to set up meetings with the other council members to determine how they will vote. Set up meetings in advance by writing and/or calling their offices (this will depend on the size of your city/town and you and your allies' relationship with the members). Make sure that when you meet with them, representatives of other organizations join you that have members in the appropriate districts and/or constituents from their districts. Bring the coalition letter and petition copies. If your council members are elected by district, be prepared to tell them the number of people in their districts that signed the petition, because that will be most important to them.

Make a direct ask for each council member to support the resolution and get a clear answer. If they ask for more information, provide it to them. If you do not know the answer, tell them you will get back with them. If they do not commit to supporting the resolution at the meetings, set follow-up meetings to get their positions.

If you do not get a commitment from any of the members, and especially if there is op-

position, you will want to implement additional tactics to pressure those members. Get people from their districts to call and ask for their support, organize people in their districts to write letters to the members' offices, or organize people to write letters to local newspapers calling on the council members who are undecided to support the resolution. Do more petition gathering and organizational outreach to ratchet up the pressure. You don't want the council to take a vote unless you think you have a good chance of the resolution passing.





## 5. Tactic: A hearing on your resolution

In most cities, if your resolution is placed on the agenda, there will be some sort of public hearing. It is possible that if no one objects, it will pass on a consent calendar. If this happens, that's great! It means you've gotten your resolution passed. However, if there is any discussion or debate, most local governments will schedule a hearing and members of the public will have a chance to make a public comment.

You should view a hearing as an organizing opportunity — even if the votes are lined up in your favor. A hearing is a chance to educate and mobilize people against fracking, to get media attention on the issue, and to demonstrate your power as organized citizen activists. Leading up to the hearing, there are a couple of important things to think about: media coverage and turnout.



### **a. Media outreach**

Media coverage serves a few important purposes. It can put pressure on members of the council to support the resolution in advance of a hearing, help educate other members of the community about the issue, and energize your base of supporters and your campaign. It can help other decision makers (members of Congress, state representatives, etc.) see your issue and note that it is a concern in their districts. So, getting your issue in the media will be important.

### **i. Letters to the editor**

A letter to the editor is a 150-to-200-word letter that anyone can submit to the editorial page of a newspaper. In large cities, it is unlikely that a newspaper will print a letter unless it responds to some article that the paper has written. If you're in a larger community, watch for fracking or energy-related news that you could tie your letter into as a response. Then get several people to submit letters that use that article to call for a ban on fracking. Make sure each letter is different and comes directly from the person submitting it.

In many smaller communities, local papers will print letters from residents on a wide range of issues. Organize people to write letters calling for a ban on fracking and urging their council members to support it. Some of these letters might get printed, putting some pressure on your targets. It will also have the effect of elevating the issue, making it more likely that a reporter will cover the resolution when it gets a hearing.

### **ii. Reach out to reporters**

The main way to alert reporters about an upcoming hearing or vote on a resolution is a media advisory. This is a short statement that has the "who, what, when, where and why" of the hearing. Write up an advisory and email it to the key reporters a week in advance of the hearing. Then call them up and talk with them about the resolution and why your community needs it. Be brief and clear — reporters are busy and probably won't want to chitchat, but a good pitch explaining why the issue is significant to your community and why they should do a story on it might result in some coverage in advance of a hearing or vote.

### ***b. At the hearing***

Having a strong presence at the hearing on your resolution is critical to getting it passed and generating positive media coverage. You'll want to pack the meeting and line up good speakers who can explain all the reasons you want a ban on fracking and why their council members need to support it.

#### **i. Turnout numbers and organizations**

You'll want to pack the meeting. There are several ways to do this. Call all the groups that support the fracking ban and ask them to come to the hearing and invite their members. Also call everyone that has signed a petition calling for the ban, tell them about the meeting and ask them to come. Send out notices about the hearing on community listservs and through social media like Facebook or Twitter.

#### **ii. Clearly identify people on your side**

If your town allows people to bring signs into the council meetings, make and bring signs that clearly call for a ban on fracking. If not, make sure everyone on your side is clearly identified by wearing the same color or having some visual identifier like stickers, buttons, hats or pins that are the same. Give everyone who comes to the hearing an 8½" x 11" piece of paper that says in large letters "Ban Fracking," or make big bright stickers that everyone can wear. When members of the council look out at the audience, they should see their constituents want a ban on fracking.

#### **iii. Press**

If representatives of the media are there, talk with them. You will want to identify in advance who from your group will talk to the media and make sure everyone is clear on the right talking points to use. If many people from the media are there, have an impromptu press conference before the hearing. If not, you can approach the members of the media individually and tell them who you are and that you and all the other people there are in support of a ban on fracking. During the

interviews, make sure to be responsive to reporters' questions, but come back to your talking points about why the city council needs to support a ban on fracking.



#### **iv. Speaking at the hearing**

Though it is different from state to state, cities or towns will usually allow members of the public to speak on issues that are on the agenda, pursuant to the state's open meeting laws. You may have to sign up just before or at the beginning of the hearing. Make sure to get there early (also important for getting good seats)! Encourage everyone to fill out speaker cards, as there may be a limit to the number of speakers. Have your top speakers lined up. If one of them doesn't get called, someone else may be able to give them his or her time slot. Prepare in advance and make a strong argument why the council should pass the resolution. Talk about how fracking will impact issues the council members care about: water quality, property values, environment, long-term economic well-being and public health.

Whoever speaks first should ask everyone who is there supporting the ban to stand up or hold up their signs or identify themselves in some public way so the council can see how broad the support is. People who represent groups should identify those groups and who they represent. Someone should also read off a list of all the organizations and businesses that signed the group letter supporting the resolution.



## 6. Follow up

If the resolution passes, congrats! If it does not pass, don't give up! It just means you need to do more organizing. Go back to step one and hold a meeting to consider next steps. You need to build a larger more powerful group to show more people support the ban. Remember, officials are ultimately elected by the voters and are accountable to the people. You'll need to organize more to demonstrate a majority of their constituents want a ban on fracking.

Once you've gotten a resolution passed calling for a ban on fracking, you'll want to make sure it has the most impact!



### ***a. Send the resolution to Food & Water Watch***

Food & Water Watch is tracking and mapping all the resolutions passed. When yours is passed, send a copy to us and we'll post it on our website where it can be shared with other activists all over the country.

### ***b. Send the resolution to your members of Congress***

Congress is considering two pieces of legislation which would regulate fracking: the FRAC Act and the BREATHE Act. Your members of Congress need to hear that you and your community oppose fracking and that they should fight — not only for those bills, but also for a ban on fracking.

### ***c. Celebrate your victory!***

If you've been successful at passing a resolution and have done the steps outlined above, you've identified a bunch of people in your community who oppose fracking and who you've been working with over the last several weeks. You've reached out to a number of organizations and built a list of groups that oppose fracking. You've done some great work! So celebrate that victory with them! This is something we don't do often enough. Celebrating victories are important because we deserve to celebrate when we win and also because it builds community and will energize everyone for the next fight.

### ***d. Build your next campaign!***

Speaking of which, beyond the local resolution, there is much more to be done. There may be a bill that would help stop fracking in your state legislature, or you may want to try to get your member of Congress to support the FRAC Act. Take some time and work with your group to pick a new goal and identify a new target to take action against fracking. Stopping big oil and gas companies from polluting our water and air won't happen overnight, but by continuing to build and mobilize in communities across the country, we'll get there. So keep organizing!

**Thanks for helping us ban the dangerous practice of fracking!**

**See our website for more tools, tips and fracking-related campaign information at:**

**[www.foodandwaterwatch.org](http://www.foodandwaterwatch.org).**

**food&waterwatch**

