Questions for Discussion: Fracking Study

These are questions that may be discussed by Leagues prior to the Fracking Study consensus. They may be discussed in any order. There are no right or wrong answers.

1. Are DMME’s proposed regulations (reference page 7) stringent enough? Too stringent? What changes would you recommend?

2. What has priority—the public’s right to know the chemicals being used in fracking, or the protection of trade secrets? Does your opinion change if the chemicals used would be disclosed to first responders in the event of an emergency?

3. How long should a well be monitored after it has been plugged and the site reclaimed? Who should have responsibility for this? Virginia? Operator? Landowner? Locality?

4. Is the amount of financial assurance currently required by the Code of Virginia sufficient (reference page 15); if not, how should it be changed? Should blanket bonding be allowed?

5. Should Virginia limit fracking to those technologies that use a reduced volume of water such as nitrogen foam frac (reference page 10)? Can you foresee any issues associated with these technologies?

6. The EPA’s Underground Injection Control program oversees the construction, operation, permitting, and closure of injection wells in Virginia. If Virginia takes responsibility, Class II wells would not need to meet EPA requirements; the standard would be an “effective program to prevent underground injection which endangers drinking water sources.” Discuss the pros and cons of Virginia jurisdiction: state vs. federal control, more or less stringent standards than EPA, Virginia’s ability to administer the program, Virginia’s willingness to take on possible additional costs, etc. (reference page 11)

7. How should seismic zones be considered when siting wells, mines, pipelines, etc. (see page 11)?

8. The only health risks definitively associated with fracking are worker-related (reference page 17). What other health risks have been linked to fracking and are they credible?

9. The 2010 anti-fracking film Gasland (which was not wholly accurate) brought concerns related to fracking into the public consciousness. Fossil fuel (oil, gas, coal) production using conventional techniques raises many of the same concerns, but does not have the same negative image. What makes fracking is so much more controversial?

10. Does national energy independence have a higher priority than concerns about fracking (reference page 3)?

11. Shale gas is cleaner than other fossil fuels—does that make it better (reference page 12)?

12. Is shale gas a bridge or a roadblock to a renewable energy future (reference page 17)?