

<http://news.yahoo.com/ill-gov-signs-law-tough-142957579.html>

Yahoo News / Associated Press

Ill. gov signs into law tough fracking regulations

Ill. governor signs nation's toughest fracking regulations; could lead to thousands of jobs

AP

By Don Babwin, Associated Press June 18, 2013 10:29 AM



In this April, 8, 2013 photo, Lucy Childers, 6, plays on the rock formations at Ferne Clyffe State Park in Goreville, Ill. Southern Illinoisans have hopes and fears surrounding the high-volume oil and gas drilling called fracking that may be starting in the Shawnee National Forest. Illinois Gov. Pat Quinn on Monday signed into law the nation's strictest regulations for high-volume oil and gas drilling. (AP Photo/Seth Perlman)

CHICAGO (AP) -- Illinois Gov. Pat Quinn on Monday signed into law the nation's strictest regulations for high-volume oil and gas drilling.

"This new law will unlock the potential for thousands of jobs in Southern Illinois and ensure that our environment is protected," Quinn said in a news release announcing his widely expected signature on the bill that he pushed for and that the Legislature passed overwhelmingly a few weeks ago.

The new law establishes rules that oil and gas companies must follow during hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, which uses high-pressure mixtures of water, sand or gravel and chemicals to crack underground rock formations and release oil and natural gas. Companies will be required to disclose chemicals and to test water before and after drilling as well as hold the companies liable for contamination.

Opponents of the legislation — who unsuccessfully pushed a 2-year moratorium to allow more time to study the environmental and health impact of fracking — said they are considering a legal challenge to the law.

"We have already put together a legal team with attorneys from all over the country to look at various aspects of the bill," said Annette McMichael, a property owner in Johnson County who belongs to a coalition that opposes fracking. "We are looking at what legal avenue to pursue."

One of the sponsors of the bill, Sen. Michael Frerichs, D-Champaign, said the fact that fracking is already happening in Illinois makes the law that much more important as the state moves to "protect the environment while allowing for job creation."

Environmental groups that helped craft the legislation said they were hopeful the safeguards will address their continued concerns about the method's "environmental impact."

"The environmental community looks forward to working with the governor and agencies to make sure that this bill is strongly enforced," Jan Walling, executive director of the Illinois Environmental Council, said in statement released by Quinn's office.

According to Quinn's office, the law would make Illinois the first state in the nation to require hydraulic fracturing operators to submit chemical disclosures to the state both before and after fracking, as well as require the companies to conduct water testing before the fracking process and then again a number of times after it's completed.

While state records indicate that hydraulic fracturing has begun on a limited basis in parts of Illinois, it will be a while before it begins in earnest because the state's Department of Natural Resources must hire dozens of new engineers, inspectors, attorneys and other experts.