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## **PennFuture praises State House for passing natural gas drilling tax against all odds; Senators must now answer “Whose side are you on?”**

(Harrisburg, PA - October 2, 2009) Citizens for Pennsylvania's Future (PennFuture) praised the Pennsylvania House of Representatives for passing legislation today to tax multi-national gas drilling companies and the tobacco industry rather than local veterans, firefighters and arts organizations. The 103 – 98 vote on the bill, HB 1531, came despite opposition to this change from Governor Rendell, the Senate leadership and, initially the House Democratic leadership, and lobbyists who have spent more than \$1 million just in 2009 to oppose the severance tax on gas drilling in the Marcellus Shale formation.

“This was an amazing David vs. Goliath victory,” said Jan Jarrett, PennFuture's president and CEO. “The conventional wisdom was that no severance tax on gas drilling would pass this year. But thanks to Representatives Dave Levdansky (D – Allegheny, Washington), Greg Vitali (D – Delaware), Bud George (D – Clearfield), and the other members of the Green Dog Caucus, as well as citizens across the state who made their voices heard, the conventional wisdom proved to be very wrong. Today's vote was a victory for our economy, environment, communities, and sound public policy.

“Now it's the Senators' turn,” continued Jarrett. “And they have one big question they must face as they vote: ‘Whose side are you on?’ ExxonMobil or your cash-strapped local volunteer fire department? Philip Morris or the Philharmonic? The lobbyists or the voters?”

“This bill will come back to the Senate for agreement very quickly, so the day of decision is at hand,” continued Jarrett. “And this is one vote the citizens will be watching closely.

“There is now no earthly need to support wide scale drilling in our public lands, since the severance tax will return the money we need,” said Jarrett. “The General Assembly has absolutely no business micromanaging our forests and demanding that the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) lease vast swaths of woodlands to the Marcellus Shale drillers. DCNR's job is to balance the multiple uses of the forests — ecological, recreational and economic — and it should be allowed to manage the forest professionally. We urge both houses to defeat any attempt to dictate that DCNR generate \$60 million from drilling in State Forests this fiscal year, and an outrageous \$180 million from drilling in State Forests in the 2010-11 fiscal year. Mandating such drilling revenue is the height of environmental irresponsibility.”

PennFuture is a statewide public interest membership organization, founded in 1998. Working from the premise that “Every environmental victory grows the economy,” PennFuture successfully advocated for landmark environmental legislation, including passage of the largest ever environmental funding bond, passage of the Alternative Energy Portfolio Standards Act, funding for green energy and energy efficiency, adoption of the Clean Vehicles Program, passage of the law requiring a statewide climate change action plan, and adoption of a regulation that protects babies from mercury pollution from coal-fired power plants. PennFuture has staff throughout the state, in Harrisburg, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, West Chester, Doylestown, and Wilkes-Barre. The *Philadelphia Inquirer* called PennFuture the “state's leading environmental advocacy organization.”

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