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Moratorium

West Virginia's leaders should have no other choice on Marcellus

— State legislative leaders feel like a special session needs to be called to continue addressing the Marcellus shale gas drilling dilemma. Acting Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin said Wednesday he has a plan so that regulation and enforcement can be handled by the Department of Environmental Protection.

We just don't feel comfortable turning this work over to a state agency without laws on the books.

It's clear that everyone in Charleston isn't on the same page on this ultra-important issue, so that really leaves them with no other option other than to halt everything right now and issue a moratorium on all drilling until adequate regulations and protections can be agreed upon.

Many weeks ago we said that the proper amount of time needed to be dedicated to Marcellus legislation. And while the Legislature did make an effort in the final few weeks of the regular session, last Saturday a conference committee couldn't even be appointed to try and work something out.

Emotions boiled over, finger-pointing was taking place over the failure to act and criticism has been leveled against many.

They've all had some time to cool off by now, so it is essential that they channel their collective energy into coming up with a workable solution.

And while they are doing that, Marcellus drilling needs to come to a grinding halt.

The gas is going to be there to extract whether its now or 10 years from now. Besides that, natural gas prices are down right now, so the timing couldn't be any better for a moratorium.

Once again, we say our elected leaders owe it to all West Virginians — because we are all affected parties — to do the right thing.