WV Drilling Waste Bill On Hold

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CHARLESTON, W.Va. (AP) — A bill to regulate the disposal of waste produced by gas-well drilling will likely be introduced by West Virginia Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin in a special session.

Lawmakers who negotiated a version both sides could agree on were unable to get the measure passed before midnight Saturday, the deadline for the regular session.

The bill would allow only seven landfills in West Virginia that have already applied to do so to create a separate area on their properties where they could store the waste. Those landfills are located in the Northern Panhandle and Northwest portion of the state.

Sen. Herb Snyder, D-Jefferson, said the bill is a huge environmental protection for the state. As it stands, the measure calls for drillings to be separated from other waste and monitored for radioactivity. "By September of this year, the waste cannot be mixed with other trash and must be put in a separate cell, and radioactivity monitors add a tremendous amount of protection over what is being done today," said Snyder. "We have learned a lot by looking at what was done in Pennsylvania and looking at the problems they were having."

The bill requires drilling companies to pay an extra $1 per ton on top of tipping fees to repair road damage done by heavy drilling trucks, at the discretion of the Department of Transportation. The first $750,000 will be used to fund professional studies on the cuttings and leeching at landfills. Snyder said the studies will examine what types of metals are in the waste in addition to their level of radioactivity.

Currently, in depth studies on drilling waste have not been conducted in West Virginia. Snyder said some Department of Environmental Protection studies were conducted after the Natural Gas Horizontal Well Act; however, Legislature determined these studies were incomplete and not sufficient, he said.

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