

Ritter to DeGette: Slow down

The governor wants the congresswoman to proceed cautiously with bill

By Mark Jaffe

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Congresswoman Diana DeGette, left, is being "encouraged" by Gov. Bill Ritter, right, to consider a study before pushing her bill. (Denver Post file photos)

Gov. Bill Ritter said Thursday he has urged Denver Congresswoman Diana DeGette to go slow on her bill to regulate oil- and gas-well hydro-fracking under the Safe Water Drinking Act.

Ritter, a Democrat, said he "encouraged" DeGette, also a Democrat, to consider a comprehensive study "instead of going directly to a new and potentially intrusive regulatory program."

Kristofer Eisenal, a spokesman for DeGette, said, "The congresswoman is moving forward with the legislation, but everything is on the table — a study, a hearing."

Fracking, which forces fluids under pressure into newly drilled wells to fracture rock and release gas, is used in 90 percent of the wells drilled in the U.S.

Ritter called fracking "essential to the development of Colorado gas resources."

Critics, however, contend that the fracturing process and the fluids used — which can contain chemicals — pose a threat to groundwater.

"I don't for a moment discount the concerns of those who worry about protection of drinking-water supplies," Ritter said. "But I also believe that we have to understand the problems and the risks before we act."

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