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Anti-fracking advocates protest at BU

By: Melissa Kakareka

While the governor was touting his Tax Free NY initiative, others in the Southern Tier wanted to hear about another issue: Hydrofracking. As our Melissa Kakareka found out, many anti-fracking advocates used the governor's visit as an opportunity to send a political message.



VESTAL, N.Y. -- Governor Andrew Cuomo wasn't in Broome County to talk about hydrofracking on Thursday. Still, anti-fracking protesters made sure the issue was prominent during his visit.

"We're here to send a strong message, that we don't want fracking in our home. He is in the midst of a completely opaque process that would allow fracking to happen and we are not ok with that," said protester Isaac Silberman-Gorn.

Dozens of anti-fracking protesters from across the Southern Tier showed up to the Binghamton University campus. Many brought signs and led chants for the governor to hear. They say when they found out the Governor was coming to town, they sent out alerts and rallied everyone together so they could express their concerns to him face to face.

"More than three years ago, we promised that we would bird-dog him on shale fracking in every community where he showed his face. And that's why we are here today," said Toxics Targeting President Walter Hang.

"This entire process is on the Governor's shoulders. He is the decision maker. He could end this tomorrow if he wanted to. So it's actually really gratifying to be able to pressure him more directly than we have been with the phone calls and letters and door knocking that we've been doing," said Silberman-Gorn.

Governor Cuomo did not interact with the protesters, but said they have a right to express their opinion.

Cuomo said, "There are protestors on fracking on both sides of the issue. You have a lot of emotion on fracking. You have a lot of people that support it. You have a lot of people who oppose it. You have people who say it's going to be the greatest thing in the world. You have people who think it's going to end the world. I've never seen a more polarized issue than this. That they want to express their opinion, great, that's what this country is all about."

The governor reiterated that the ultimate decision on fracking will come down to science and not emotion. He says the state's decision will follow the advice of the DEC Commissioner and the state Health Commissioner.

Meanwhile, anti-fracking advocates weren't the only ones hoping to have their voices heard on Thursday. The Joint Landowners Coalition of New York hosted an educational forum in Albany for policy makers and business leaders. The goal of the seminar was to address concerns and questions about natural gas development.