

# CORNING GIRLS HOST MAINE-ENDWELL

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# TOWN PANTS SHOW AT 2300 DEGREES TONIGHT

CHECK OUT TODAY'S wknd.

THUR 35/28 FRI 32/26 SAT 33/24  
Complete forecast, A10

Wednesday's local sports roundup  
SPORTS, PAGE B3



# The LEADER

Thursday, December 18, 2014

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\$1

## STATE

### NY men convicted for cockfighting

Authorities say two Ulster County farmers have pleaded guilty to a felony for their role in cockfighting. The Attorney General's Office says 71-year-old farm owner Moises Cruz and 60-year-old manager Manuel Cruz pleaded guilty in Ulster County Court to violating the state prohibition against animal fighting. They could face up to nine months in jail at sentencing Feb. 26. Almost 4,000 birds taken from the Plattekill farm have been euthanized. The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty for Animals says it was necessary because of diseases and their highly aggressive nature. The men were arrested in February following a raid at a Queens cockfight.

### NYC suit: Help transit riders

A lawsuit says it's seeking to end discrimination by the New York City Transit Authority against people with limited English who try to use a program providing transportation to those with disabilities. The lawsuit was filed Wednesday in federal court in Manhattan. It seeks class action status to end what it says is a discriminatory policy and practice involving the city's Access-A-Ride program. Access-A-Ride provides vans for tens of thousands of people as a substitute for subways and buses.

Five named plaintiffs maintain they've encountered barriers, delays, denials and discrimination when they apply to the program. They say they were denied equal access to public transportation and suffered emotional harm.

### Guard convicted in inmate's death

A New York City jail guard has been convicted of a civil rights charge after a jury concluded he ignored the pleas of a dying Rikers Island inmate who had swallowed a toxic soap ball. Terrence Pendergrass shook his head repeatedly as the verdict was announced Wednesday in Manhattan federal court. The 50-year-old guard faces up to 10 years in prison at his April 17 sentencing.

—The Associated Press

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FINALLY, A DECISION

# NY bans fracking



New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Commissioner Joseph Martens, second from left, talks on hydraulic fracturing during a cabinet meeting at the Capitol on Wednesday in Albany. Gov. Andrew Cuomo's administration will move to prohibit fracking in the state, citing unresolved health issues and dubious economic benefits of the widely used gas-drilling technique. Acting health commissioner Dr. Howard Zucker is seated left. AP PHOTO/MIKE GROLL

## Officials cite health risks, question economic benefits

By Mary Esch  
The Associated Press

ALBANY | Handing environmentalists a breakthrough victory, New York plans to prohibit fracking for natural gas because of what regulators say are its unexplored health risks and dubious economic benefits.

New York, which overlies part of the gas-rich Marcellus Shale formation that has led to a drilling boom in Pennsylvania and other nearby states, has banned shale gas development since 2008, when the state began an environmental review of the drilling technique also known as hydraulic fracturing.

Wednesday's announcement, though not final, means a ban is all but etched in stone.

"Never before has a state with proven gas reserves banned fracking," said Deborah Goldberg, an attorney with Earthjustice,

adding that the decision "will give courage to elected leaders throughout the country and world: Fracking is too dangerous and must not continue."

Industry and its supporters expressed outrage at the decision.

"We are very disappointed that it appears the governor is unwilling to be a leader and is going to pass the buck at the expense of New Yorkers," said Jack Gerard, president of the American Petroleum Institute.

"This technology has been used for over 65 years in the United States. It's been demonstrated repeatedly after drilling millions of wells that we're able to do it while protecting the environment and protecting the people."

Environmental Commissioner Joe Martens said Wednesday that he is recommending a ban, and Gov. Andrew Cuomo,

SEE FRACKING, A10

"Today's decision by the Cuomo administration to say no to high-volume hydrofracking in the Marcellus Shale eviscerates the hope of so many Southern Tier farmers, landowners, businesses and potential jobs in the natural gas industry. As the United States stands on the cusp of energy independence, Governor Cuomo today said no."



State Sen. Tom O'Mara, R-Big Flats

JUDGMENT DAY

# Casino projects selected

Picks don't include Nichols or Johnson City facilities

By David Klepper  
The Associated Press

ALBANY | Three economically distressed counties in upstate New York have been selected as sites for casinos, a panel announced Wednesday, bringing an end to a fierce competition among developers and job-hungry communities.

The Gaming Facility Location Board chose sites in Sullivan, Schenectady and Seneca counties and decided not to recommend a fourth license amid an increasingly saturated gambling market where consumers have more options closer to home. While casinos were once limited to Las Vegas, Atlantic City and a handful of tribal reservations, most Americans are now within a few hours' drive of a gambling facility.

Voters last year authorized up to four casinos in three upstate regions: the

SEE PROJECTS, A8



Jeff Gural, owner of Tioga Downs, talks to reporters after a meeting of the Gaming Facility Location Board Wednesday in Albany. Tioga Downs was not recommended for a casino license. AP PHOTO/MIKE GROLL



Anti-Castro protester Don Hernandez chants anti-Obama slogans Wednesday in the Little Havana area of Miami after a surprise move announced by senior Obama administration officials that could pave the way for a major shift in U.S. policy toward Cuba. AP PHOTO/ALAN DIAZ

'IT'S TIME FOR A NEW APPROACH'

# US, Cuba patch torn relations

By Julie Pace and Matthew Lee  
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON | After a half-century of Cold War acrimony, the United States and Cuba moved on Wednesday to restore diplomatic relations a historic shift that could revitalize the flow of money and people across the narrow waters that separate the two nations.

President Barack Obama's dramatic announcement in Washington seconded by Cuban President Raul Castro in Havana was accompanied by a quiet exchange of imprisoned spies and the celebratory release of American Alan Gross, a government contract worker who had been held in Cuba for five years.

The shift in U.S.-Cuba policy was the culmination

of 18 months of secret talks between the longtime foes that included a series of meetings in Canada and the personal involvement of Pope Francis at the Vatican. It also marked an extraordinary undertaking by Obama without Congress' authorization as he charts the waning years of his presidency.

"These 50 years have

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# Local responses to the governor's ban on fracking

"I think the state is losing out on a tremendous tax revenue that could have been generated ... The claim that it can't be done safely - his two experts have more knowledge than all the experts in the federal government, the EPA, Bureau of Land Management, the Department of Energy, the Department of the Interior? They all have experts, and they've all said this can be done safely .... There's a lot of money left on the table for landowners, and the other residents of New York state that could benefit from this."

— Neil Vitale, Steuben County Landowners Coalition

"We're tremendously pleased and relieved that our Governor has listened to the majority of New York citizens, and he's heeded the science that says fracking is far too big a risk for our state. Now we have to seriously turn our attention to the dangerous infrastructure components of fracking - the pipelines, compressor stations, waste disposal sites and so on- which are already threatening our health and safety."

— Statement from People for a Healthy Environment, local environmental group

"This is devastating news for the Southern Tier economy and its residents who are struggling every day. This decision makes it even more difficult to replace the good jobs that have already left due to New York's unfriendly business climate. Once again Albany shows that it wants to enact an extreme liberal agenda rather than care about individual property rights and job opportunities. I care about Southern Tier residents and will fight for them every day. Simply put this extreme liberal agenda is not right and not fair for our future."

— U.S. Rep. Tom Reed, R-Corning

## FRACKING

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a Democrat, responded that he would defer to Martens and Acting Health Commissioner Howard Zucker on the decision.

The Department of Environmental Conservation will put out a final environmental impact statement early next year, Martens said, and after that he will issue an order prohibiting fracking.

About 30 anti-fracking activists cheered the decision at a rally outside Cuomo's New York City office, chanting "Thank you, Governor Cuomo, for saving our air!" and "New York banned fracking - and next, United States!"

Zucker and Martens on Wednesday summarized environmental and health reviews that concluded fracking carries risks that haven't been studied enough.

The drilling boom in the Marcellus Shale, which also runs under Ohio and West Virginia, was made possible by high-volume hydraulic fracturing, which releases gas from rock by injecting wells with chemically treated water at high

pressure.

The technique has generated tens of billions of dollars in industry profits and landowner royalties, and has reduced energy bills and fuel imports. But it has also brought concerns and sparked protests over air and water pollution, earthquakes, property devaluation and truck traffic.

Zucker said he had identified "significant public health risks" and "red flag" health issues that require long-term studies before fracking can be called safe. He likened fracking to secondhand smoke, which wasn't fully understood as a health risk until many years of scientific study were done.

Martens noted the low price of natural gas, the high local cost of industry oversight, and the large areas that would be off limits to shale gas development because of setback requirements, water supply protections and local prohibitions. Those factors, he said, combine to make fracking less economically beneficial than anticipated.

Even if drilling were allowed in New York, it probably wouldn't take off any time soon because of the



Acting health commissioner Dr. Howard Zucker presents the department's findings on hydraulic fracturing during a cabinet meeting at the Capitol Wednesday in Albany. At right is environmental conservation commissioner Joseph Martens. Gov. Andrew Cuomo's administration will move to prohibit fracking in the state, citing unresolved health issues and dubious economic benefits of the widely used gas-drilling technique. AP PHOTO/MIKE GROLL

uncertainty around regulations and legal challenges and the huge number of promising drilling locations that remain in Pennsylvania, David Spigelmyer, president of the industry group Marcellus Shale Coalition, said last week.

The Marcellus Shale is enticing to energy companies because of its proximity

to the major demand centers of New York City and New England, which is paying more for gas because of delivery constraints. But the regulatory uncertainty remains too high to commit to drilling in New York, Spigelmyer said.

In states where fracking is not yet allowed or is happening but is subject to

criticism, New York's move excited some anti-drilling activists.

"The more fracking expands, the more opposition grows," said Sharon Wilson, of the group Earthworks, who has organized anti-fracking activists in Texas, California and Colorado. "Industry is its own worst enemy because

they continue to deny the impacts."

Fracking supporters decried the New York move. Karen Moreau, executive director of New York's branch of the American Petroleum Institute, said the Cuomo administration is denying landowners the right to develop their mineral resources.

"The secretary of energy, the U.S. EPA administrator and President Obama recognize the benefits of fracking, and yet the Cuomo administration simply did not want to anger their activist base," Moreau said.

Dan Fitzsimmons, president of the Joint Landowners Coalition, which represents leaseholders, accused Cuomo of appeasing "environmental extremists" for political gain.

"Is our health department ignoring impacts of other energy options and suggesting that we continue with our reliance on coal and nuclear energy?" Fitzsimmons said. "Did our health department consider the health effects of poverty and unemployment?"

Cuomo said he is expecting lawsuits will be filed "every which way from Sunday."

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## HEALTH CRIMINAL CASE

# 14 charged in deadly meningitis outbreak

By Denise Lavoie  
The Associated Press

BOSTON | In the biggest criminal case ever brought in the U.S. over contaminated medicine, 14 former owners or employees of a Massachusetts pharmacy were charged Wednesday in connection with a 2012 meningitis outbreak that killed 64 people.

The nationwide outbreak was traced to tainted drug injections manufactured by the now-closed New England Compounding Pharmacy of Framingham.

Barry Cadden, a co-founder of the business, and Glenn Adam Chin, a pharmacist who was in charge of the sterile room, were hit with the most serious charges, accused in a federal racketeering indictment of causing the deaths of 25 patients in seven states by "acting in wanton and willful disregard of the likelihood" of death or great bodily harm.

Among other things, Cadden, Chin and others are accused of using expired ingredients, failing to properly sterilize drugs

and failing to test them to make sure they were pure. The other defendants were charged with such crimes as fraud and interstate sale of adulterated drugs.

U.S. Attorney Carmen Ortiz said NECC was "filthy" and failed to comply with even basic health standards, and employees knew it. For example, she said, they falsified logs on when labs were cleaned.

"Production and profit were prioritized over safety," Ortiz said.

More than 750 people in 20 states were sickened - about half of them with a rare fungal form of meningitis, the rest with joint or spinal infections - and 64 died. The steroids given were for medical purposes, not for bodybuilding; most patients received the injections for back pain.

In reaction to the outbreak, Congress last year increased federal oversight of so-called compounding pharmacies like NECC, which custom-mix medications in bulk and supply them directly to hospitals and doctors.

**FIVE-DAY FORECAST**

**Today**  
Mostly cloudy, poss. sct. snow showers  
High | 35 Low | 28

**Friday**  
M. cloudy, a few stray flurries  
High | 32 Low | 26

**Saturday**  
Mostly to partly cloudy  
High | 33 Low | 24

**Sunday**  
Partly cloudy  
High | 35 Low | 27

**Monday**  
P. cloudy, poss. showers overnight  
High | 37 Low | 30

**National forecast**  
Forecast highs for Thursday, Dec. 18

Sunny Pt. Cloudy Cloudy

Fronts Cold Warm Stationary Pressure High Low

MOON PHASES  
First Full Last New  
DEC. 28 JAN. 5 JAN. 13 DEC. 22

SUNRISE | SUNSET  
Sunrise today 7:32  
Sunset today 4:38  
Sunrise Friday 7:32  
Sunset Friday 4:39

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