

PAINTED POST, NY—With the Hake Landfill towering behind them, congressional candidate Tracy Mitrano (D-23rd) and Leslie Danks Burke, candidate for the New York State Senate (D-58th), called for an end to political corruption at the state and federal level. The site was chosen to represent one of five landfills in the 23rd district that, until this week, accepted toxic waste with known carcinogens and radioactive radon and radium from hydraulic fracturing for natural gas in Pennsylvania.



New York State banned “fracking” in 2015, citing environmental and health concerns over chemicals used in the process. Natural gas companies refuse to disclose which chemicals they use, but at least some are believed to be carcinogenic.

State lawmakers also tried to ban waste fluid disposal, but were thwarted by Danks Burke’s Republican opponent, State Senator Tom O’Mara, who cast the deciding vote against the dumping ban. Although the companies opposing the dumping ban were clients of his law practice, O’Mara refused to recuse himself from votes that directly affected their business.

Danks Burke recognized Governor Andrew Cuomo for signing legislation this week that prohibits disposal of fracking fluid in New York state, but pointed out that the waste fluid already stored in upstate landfills not only remains, but will not break down and will remain there for the rest of our lifetimes. “We’ve been dumped on for too long, in too many ways,” she said.

Mitrano seconded Danks Burke and said it’s time to rid state and federal legislatures of corrupt politicians, “whether they’re representing waste management in violation of the obvious intent of the fracking ban in New York, or a congressman who voted 70 times against the Affordable Care Act, because his family business is medical debt collection”—a reference to her opponent, Republican Rep. Tom Reed.

The five counties in the 23rd district that store fracking fluid are Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chemung, Seneca and Steuben, where the Hake Landfill is located. The two candidates appeared at an earlier press conference at the Chemung County Landfill.

At both sites, Mitrano cited the landfill in Ontario County, which is outside the district but near her home in Penn Yan. Observing that such facilities are almost always located in areas where the population is without money or resources to fight against them—and are left to deal with polluted ground water, a ruined landscape and odor problems—Mitrano issued a challenge to her audience.

“Go to the Ontario landfill,” she urged. “Take your mask off, and see if you can stand it.”

*The Hake Landfill presser can be seen in its entirety on the Danks Burke Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/lesliefornewyork>.*

*An audio file from that presser, with Mitrano’s remarks and both candidates answering questions from reporters, can be downloaded at [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1DIMuucKx\\_6hla5zADYD\\_dYYt1IKgERf2/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1DIMuucKx_6hla5zADYD_dYYt1IKgERf2/view?usp=sharing)*

*Still images from both pressers can be downloaded here: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/6HWtSAQR Ae2WcnHY6>*