

Publication: The Denver Post; Date: Aug 7, 2014; Section: Business; Page: 10A

HICKENLOOPER'S DRILLING COMPROMISE

## Success of oil, gas panel hinges on legislation

By **Mark Jaffe** *The Denver Post*

Gov. John Hickenlooper said Wednesday that the success of his handpicked commission on oil and gas drilling hinges on getting legislation to address the land-use conflicts between homeowners and drillers.

The goal is to find a balance in protecting homes and at the same time protecting mineral rights, Hickenlooper said.

The governor made his comments during an appearance at a conference held by the Colorado Oil and Gas Association, a trade group.

"If we get legislation, there is a reasonable chance we will buy considerable time," Hickenlooper said.

The 20-person commission was announced Monday as part of a compromise to keep two oil- and gas-oriented initiatives from the fall ballot.

One measure required drill rigs be set back at least 2,000 feet from homes; the other would have bolstered local control of drilling by adding an environmental bill of rights to the state constitution.

"If the 2,000-foot setback had passed, I think the consequences would have been more significant and greater than people thought," Hickenlooper said.

Both initiatives, backed by U.S. Rep. Jared Polis, D-Boulder, were withdrawn Tuesday, as were two industry-backed ballot proposals.

Hickenlooper described the push for the initiatives and the action by five municipalities to place bans on moratoriums on drilling "a rebellion."

"People were very frightened," he said.

At the same time, the mineral rights owned by individuals and companies have to be guaranteed. Under Colorado split estate, land and the minerals below it may be owned by different parties. The commission will be composed of six members representing environmental and local groups impacted by drilling, six from industry, likely one representing homebuilders, another agriculture and four from the oil and gas industry, and six civic leaders, Hickenlooper said.

The civic leaders — perhaps former Supreme Court justices or academics — would be people who have not taken a position on oil and gas development.

Hickenlooper said he would try to select a group "with the attitude to get to yes."

The commission will have six months to make recommendations to the legislature — based on at least a two-thirds vote.

"It's a push," Hickenlooper said, pointing out that the legislature meets for just four months. "We want to make sure there is enough time."

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Gov. John Hickenlooper will choose 20 people to serve on the committee, which has six months to make its

recommendations.

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