



For Immediate Release: September 5, 2024

Contact: Steve Helmin, 518-339-2400, StopEnergySprawl@gmail.com

Brian Wilson, 315-314-0164, info@nyenergyalliance.org

Eric Dawson, 202-746-5108, eric@nuclearny.org

Keith Schue, 407-470-9433, keithschue@gmail.com

New Yorkers call for a sensible energy plan

Syracuse, New York – As policymakers convene an energy summit in Syracuse on how to salvage climate legislation, community leaders join with energy experts, business, and labor in calling for sensibility.

At issue is the 2019 Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA), signed into law by former Governor Andrew Cuomo. Recently, the [New York State Energy Research & Development Authority](#) (NYSERDA) reported that the Act's 2030 goal of meeting 70% of electricity with renewables will not be met. This follows increasingly dire warnings by the New York Independent System Operator (NYISO) of reliability problems and blackouts in trying to replace dispatchable fossil fuel power plants with intermittent solar and wind. Meanwhile, communities across New York are objecting to the heavy hand of government forcing them to sacrifice farmland and forest for sprawling energy projects that will not solve the problem. With disaster on the horizon, over [sixty business groups and labor unions](#) penned a letter urging the Governor to chart a different course.

“In the past five years, we haven’t had climate leadership or community protection,” said Steve Helmin of [Stop Energy Sprawl](#), a coalition of more than 40 community organizations and municipal officials across New York. “So it’s good to see the state finally considering other options.”

In its report, NYSERDA identified a slew of reasons for failure—from supply chains, to infrastructure, to inflation. According to the state [Comptroller](#), poor planning and bad data are to blame. But for those who understand energy generation and delivery, it comes as no surprise.

“The problem is that New York has been pursuing a lopsided strategy that relies on massive amounts of underperforming, intermittent technology,” said Greg Sacco, Sr., a 35-year veteran operator of the electric grid. “In terms of land, materials, and infrastructure, it is the most intensive, complex, and inefficient approach imaginable. Factoring in system-level costs of storage, transmission, and backup power, it is also the most expensive.”

In fact, since 2019, New York has lost ground, burning more fossil fuels for electricity today than before the CLCPA became law.

“Upstate has been generating reliable carbon-free energy for decades thanks to baseload hydropower and nuclear power. Yet following the closure of downstate nuclear, New York City is dependent on gas for nearly all of its electricity,” said Keith Schue with *New York Energy & Climate Advocates*. “If the state hopes to shut down fossil fuel power plants, it must learn from past mistakes.”

The headstrong pursuit of flawed policy has also stripped communities of their rights. To promote sprawling industrial-scale solar and wind projects, the New York Office of Renewable Energy Siting (ORES) has overridden local laws, bypassed the State Environmental Quality Review Act, and limited public input. Recently, those powers were expanded to approve transmission lines that could sit idle much of the time, while authorizing eminent domain to take private land that stands in the way.

“Home rule has literally been tossed to the wind,” said Kimberly Scannell, Planning Commissioner for the Town of Rotterdam. “New York needs an energy system that produces reliable electricity where the demand is, not a tangled web of extension cords.

Last year the state even mandated a lowball appraisal methodology for solar and wind projects that slashed tax revenue to municipalities by up to 80%.

“It’s been a gift to out-of-state energy companies at the expense of disadvantaged rural communities,” said Don Airey, Blenheim Town Supervisor and Energy Committee chair for the Schoharie County Board of Supervisors. “Local governments and school districts can no longer collect fair tax revenue for the projects they are forced to host. How is that environmental justice?”

Without a policy shift, ratepayers will pay dearly too. After renewable developers threatened to abandon projects, NYSERDA began awarding “strike price” guarantees as high as \$150 per megawatt-hour, several times the cost of electricity on the market today. Meanwhile utilities are having to front the cost of infrastructure for a Rube Goldberg grid that requires too many parts.

Despite their grievances, communities suffering under the CLCPA share the hope of energy experts, business, and labor that the summit in Syracuse offers the chance for a brighter future.

“This could be a turning point,” said Brian Wilson of [New York Energy Alliance](#). “If New York is serious about growing its economy with in-state manufacturing, supporting data centers of the future, and supplying the electricity that heat pumps and electric vehicles require, it will need abundant, reliable energy.”

“Nobody disputes that renewables have a role to play,” added Dietmar Detering of [Nuclear New York](#). “However, if New York hopes to fight climate change while generating ample energy to support a vibrant economy, it needs an inclusive plan that does not discriminate against compact, carbon-free solutions.

“Labor knows that good jobs are not in unpacking solar panels from China,” said Greg Harkenrider, Vice-President of *Stop Energy Sprawl*. “It’s time to invest in robust, dependable technology made in America.”

Yet while those concerned are grateful for the summit scheduled on September 5th, they are also aware that some are urging the state to double-down on a failing strategy.

“That would be a big mistake,” responded Ginger Schroder, labor attorney and Cattaraugus County legislator. “Ideological hubris is what led to the energy disaster our state now faces. Rather than throwing good money after bad, New York needs a plan that can produce clean energy without stomping on communities, destroying rural land and economies, and undermining the state’s future.”

“Policymakers need to set ideology aside, bring experts to the table who understand how the grid works, and perform a credible assessment of feasibility, impacts, and cost,” concluded Helmin. “Only then can New York develop a realistic energy plan employing a diverse set of resources that will protect nature, respect communities, and effectively reduce greenhouse gas emissions.”

###