



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

Statement from Senator Catharine Young Regarding the Request for Public Comment from the PSC Regarding Discontinuing the Contract Between NRG and National Grid

CATHARINE YOUNG May 31, 2016

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“This solicitation for public comment from the Public Service Commission (PSC) is upsetting and disappointing, especially after our community successfully came together and worked so hard to rally for repowering. As long as the contract between NRG and National Grid is in place, there is hope to repower the NRG plant into a clean, efficient natural gas facility that would provide jobs and stabilize the tax base. Now the PSC is pushing to discontinue the contract based on the fact that NRG has failed to begin the construction, the PSC and the Independent System Operator (ISO) have instituted policies to make New York State dependent on out-of-state generators and transmission, and the fact that there is a Supreme Court decision which holds that state regulators cannot interfere with wholesale interstate power markets.

“While I will be submitting my comments to the PSC that the contract should stay in place, I condemn the state’s new found policy to destroy our power generators, and thus our jobs and tax base, by relying on importing power from Canada and dirty coal plants in neighboring states, including Pennsylvania and Ohio. Most notably, the PSC previously approved a huge transmission project so that National Grid now draws power into Western

New York from Pennsylvania's Homer City, one of the hugest, filthiest coal plants in the country. The substation that was completed last December has a 345,000 volt line coming from Homer City into a substation in Cattaraugus County, reducing the voltage to 115,000 volts, the same voltage that was generated by Dunkirk NRG's power station. There also is transmission construction south of Dunkirk by Pennsylvania's First Energy power company, which also is replacing Western New York's power generators.

"These out-of-state imports have replaced NRG's power that is needed to maintain system reliability. Pennsylvania's grid power has triple the greenhouse gas emissions than New York State power sources, and Pennsylvania does not belong to the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI). All of those toxic pollutants spewing from these neighboring coal plants and the acid rain generated by them drifts into New York State, negatively impacting our people's health and our environment.

"Killing New York jobs and taking away our power generation hurts our economy, and dooms Western New York's ability to expand manufacturing opportunities. We need the jobs. Reliability is an enormous issue. The Northeast blackout of 2003, a widespread power outage that lasted up to a week and severely affected our state, including New York City, was caused by operator error and overloaded transmission lines that struck unpruned tree branches in Ohio. We should have control over our power systems to avoid these types of disasters instead of depending on outside entities. Also, it's a safe bet that when Canada and other states control our power flow and the market, they will jack up the prices on our consumers. And if there ever is a power shortage we will be at their mercy, and they most likely will be taking care of their constituents first over New York residents, potentially leaving us with brownouts and blackouts. The PSC and ISO policy of exporting our jobs and power generation is a catastrophe.

“New York State government should be held accountable for these terrible decisions. The madness of wiping out our power generation has to end. It hurts every New York State resident. That is why I am introducing legislation to require an analysis of imported power, a comparison of pollution from out-of-state generation to our power plants, and an analysis of its effect on our state’s power industry.

“In the meantime, our regional taxpayers will not be hurt because we successfully fought to include the power plant mitigation fund in this year’s state budget, so the tax loss from the NRG pilot payment will be offset to the Dunkirk School District, the City of Dunkirk, and Chautauqua County. But we need long term solutions. If the PSC does discontinue the contract between NRG and National Grid, I will work as hard as I can to effectuate alternate solutions that will grow jobs, the economy, and the tax base.”