



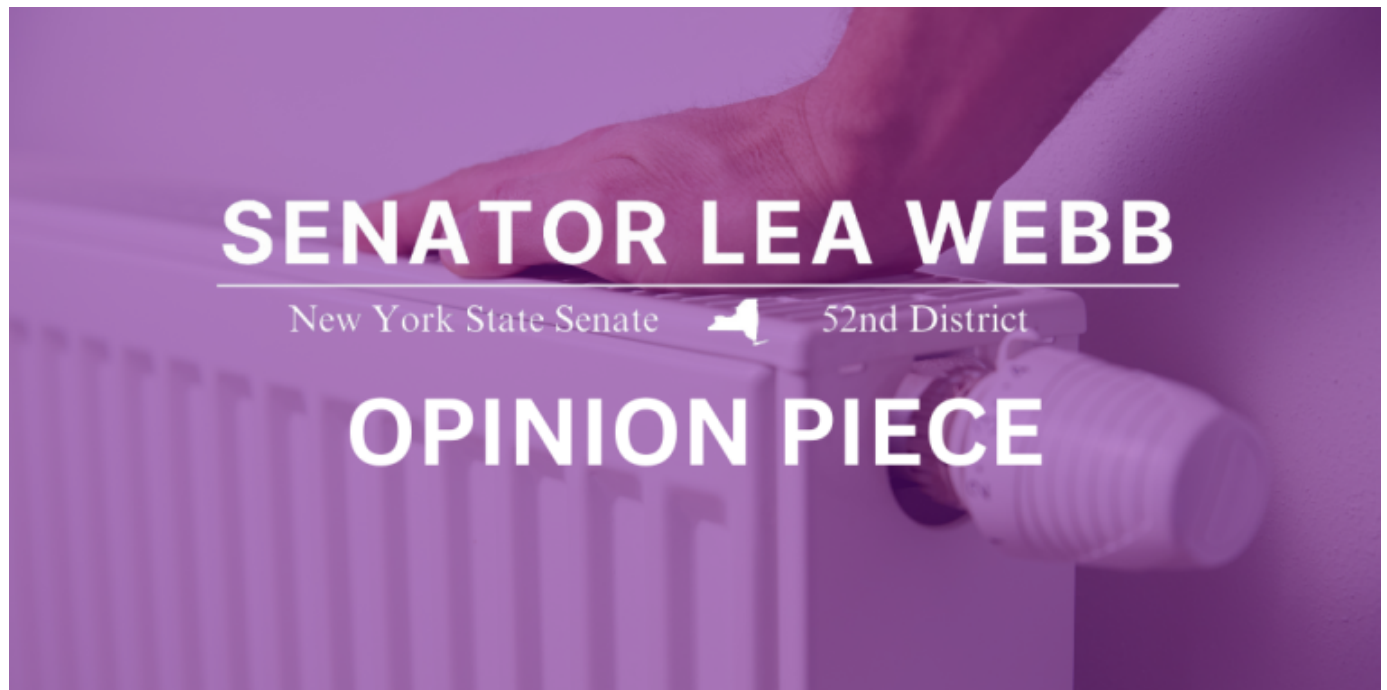
NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Lea Webb

## Op-Ed: The NY HEAT Act will help families and fight climate change

LEA WEBB January 8, 2024

| ISSUE: **PUBLIC UTILITIES**



Commentary: Legislation will shield low- and middle-income New Yorkers from skyrocketing bills while also moving us toward cleaner energy sources.

Across the state, gas and electric bills are skyrocketing. But these hikes don't affect us all the same. For many of my constituents, it's a matter of being able to keep the lights on, food on the table, and their businesses open. They cannot afford to wait.

That's why I urge Gov. Kathy Hochul to include the NY HEAT Act in her executive budget to reduce future rate hikes and put up to \$75 per month back into the pockets of low- and middle-income families.

According to a recent [Siena poll](#), 8 in 10 New Yorkers across party lines say the high cost of living in New York is a major problem. And recent utility hikes are exacerbating this crisis. Experts [agree](#) that utility bills higher than 6% of a family's income are unaffordable. But in 2019 – even before this new wave of rate hikes – data from the Public Utility Law Project shows that across the state, low-income New Yorkers on average are spending 13.4% of their income on their energy bills. In some regions, it's as high as 17%.

And it's only getting worse. The state Public Service Commission recently approved new rates for NYSEG customers in the Southern Tier that will cost the average customer \$40 more every month after they take full effect. In the Hudson Valley, Central Hudson's proposed gas and electric rate hikes could cost customers close to a whopping [\\$30 a month](#). ConEd, National Grid, RG&E and National Fuel Gas also hiked rates or proposed rate hikes last year, raising energy bills for the majority of New Yorkers.

Passing the NY HEAT Act would give families relief from these skyrocketing bills. This legislation, which has 75 sponsors in the Assembly and has already passed the state Senate, will not only reduce future gas rate hikes across the state, but will protect the planet by stopping the expansion of the fracked gas system. It will cap utility bills for low- and middle-income New Yorkers at 6% of income, saving them up to \$75 a month on their utility bills. And it will get rid of the unfair 100-foot rule, which forces New York families to subsidize new gas hookups to the tune of [\\$200 million](#) every year.

The NY HEAT Act will also allow utilities to redirect \$150 billion that would have gone toward expanding the fracked gas pipeline network, and instead put it toward clean energy

systems.

Within the past year alone, New Yorkers have breathed in toxic air while the sky turned orange, suffered through extreme heat and watched roads and property wash away in floods. Yet we're being asked to pour more and more money into this system that's harming us and destroying the planet for our children.

Many of our neighbors don't have the luxury of worrying about climate change when they're worried about how to keep the lights on or afford their next meal. Families here in the Southern Tier and across the state deserve both a safe environment and equitable access to utilities. By including the NY HEAT Act in next year's budget, Gov. Hochul help with both: She can fight climate change and put money back into the pockets of struggling New Yorkers.

*This opinion piece was originally published by **Times Union**.*

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#### RELATED LEGISLATION

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### 2023-S2016A

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- Introduced
- - In Committee Assembly
  - In Committee Senate

- ○ On Floor Calendar Assembly
  - On Floor Calendar Senate

- ○ Passed Assembly
  - Passed Senate

- Delivered to Governor

- Signed By Governor

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Aligns utility regulation with state climate justice and emission reduction targets; and repeals certain provisions of the public service law relating to gas service and sale

January 18, 2023

In Assembly Committee

Sponsored by Liz Krueger

Do you support this bill?