



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Suzi Oppenheimer

Oppenheimer Budget Hearing Question Brings Focus on Alternative Energy Sources to Indian Point

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Seizing the opportunity at a recent Joint Legislative Budget hearing on Environmental Conservation, Senator Suzi Oppenheimer (D-Mamaroneck) asked New York's top energy official about the availability of adequate and affordable alternative energy sources should the Indian Point nuclear plant be closed.

"We know that the Governor is very interested in closing down the nuclear power plant, Indian Point, which supplies energy to Westchester and New York City," said the Senator. "What would be your best guess for what will take the place of Indian Point if it does get closed?" asked Oppenheimer of NYS Energy Research Development Authority President and CEO, Francis J. Murray.

Murray, who served on a National Academy of Sciences Committee specifically formed to address this question, replied:

“We were not asked to opine whether Indian Point should or should not operate. We were given the assumption that Indian Point is closing. *Can we in fact assure adequate power, energy and ancillary services? And the resounding answer to that question is ‘yes.’ There are many options available that will ensure that energy will continue to flow into the metropolitan New York City area.*”

While energy efficiency will play an important role, the NYSERDA President/CEO stated, “some investment in hardware” will clearly be needed. But Murray assured the Senator that “lots of creative people are looking at Indian Point and frankly see that as an opportunity to invest here in New York State in new solutions.”

Because of the unregulated nature of the industry, Murray noted, developers tend to keep new solutions “close to the vest,” making it difficult to list the most probable energy alternatives with specificity. But, concluded Murray, “I have absolutely no doubt – none whatsoever – that there are solutions available, some of which are talked about publicly, some of which are not, that will assure that there will be an adequate, affordable and reliable supply of electricity to the downstate area when – not if – Indian Point closes.”

Senator Oppenheimer recently joined with several colleagues in the Assembly to file an amicus brief in the case of Brodsky v. U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, which challenges the NRC’s decision to grant an exemption to Indian Point from complying with mandated fire safety requirements. While the amicus brief questions the legality of granting a rules exemption without proper notice and an opportunity for public comment, “the case highlights the vulnerability of New York residents who live in close proximity to Indian Point,” said Oppenheimer. “That vulnerability is compounded when long-standing safety rules are disregarded by the very agency charged with ensuring the safe operation of our nuclear plants.”

Senator Oppenheimer has been strong advocate of closing Indian Point, which is situated in densely populated Westchester County. Indian Point is privately owned and operated by Entergy Nuclear Operations, Inc.

A video clip of Senator Oppenheimer’s exchange with NYSERDA President/CEO Francis Murray can be found on the Senator’s website,

www.oppenheimer.nysenate.gov.