



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

O'Mara criticizes Cuomo's move to eliminate local decision-making: Calls on local officials at a Cuomo administration budget meeting today in Elmira to oppose new proposal to bypass local input over siting of renewable energy systems

THOMAS F. O'MARA February 26, 2020

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Upstate New York localities deserve to have a voice and a stake in what will likely be increasingly numerous and potentially complex efforts to develop and distribute renewable energy across the state, which will inevitably include the siting of renewable energy systems throughout our communities.

Elmira, N.Y., February 27—State Senator Tom O'Mara (R,C,I-Big Flats) is voicing his own opposition and calling on local leaders to also oppose the latest move by Governor Andrew Cuomo to create a new state bureaucracy that O'Mara says would eliminate local decision-making on the future siting of renewable energy systems statewide.

Cuomo, as part of newly released 30-day amendments to his 2020-2021 state budget proposal, wants to create a new, state-level "Office of Green Energy Siting." As proposed by the governor, the new office would specifically bypass local decision-making and allow the state to "locate, identify, assess, acquire, develop, market, and dispose of sites that appear suitable for the development of renewable (energy) facilities, including 'build ready sites.'"

O'Mara called it the latest attempt by the governor to consolidate control at the state level over the emerging and potentially controversial green energy economy.

"Upstate New York localities deserve to have a voice and a stake in what will likely be increasingly numerous and potentially complex efforts to develop and distribute renewable energy across the state, which will inevitably include the siting of renewable energy systems throughout our communities," said O'Mara, a member of the Senate Environmental Conservation Committee. "Governor Cuomo is moving to completely remove local control and input, and bypass local zoning in what are going to be significant economic and environmentally impactful siting decisions. The well-being of local communities will take a back seat to what's best for the state in terms of costs and siting. We need to raise our voices against this action."

O'Mara added that he is also strongly opposed to Cuomo's attempts in this year's state budget to shift more of the responsibility for the cost of Medicaid back to counties and already overburdened local property taxpayers.

“We have worked very hard in the Legislature to shift this burden more to the state and off the county property taxpayer,” said O’Mara. “The actions we have achieved over the past several years have resulted in the local cost share of Medicaid being reduced to roughly half of what it would currently be without the changes we’ve enacted. We need to be working toward a full state takeover, not a reversal of the gains we've made.”

O’Mara said he has encouraged area government and economic development leaders to express opposition to the proposed Office of Green Energy Siting and the Medicaid cost shift at a Cuomo administration meeting today in Elmira.

Administration officials are traveling around the state to meet with local officials to provide information on the Cuomo budget plan. State Liquor Authority Chair Vince Bradley will preside over today’s meeting at the Elmira YWCA beginning at noon.