



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Pete Harckham

Galef and Harckham Vow Continued Support for Jobs, Local Funding and Oversight at Indian Point

PETE HARCKHAM April 29, 2020

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Buchanan, NY – New York State Senator Pete Harckham and Assemblywoman Sandy Galef promised today to continue their strong support for workforce protections, local investments and rigorous oversight while the Indian Point Energy Center undergoes its decommissioning process.

With the shutdown of Indian Point's Unit 2 reactor set to begin on April 30, the two state lawmakers, in whose legislative districts are, respectively, home to the 58-year-old nuclear power plant station, reaffirmed their commitment to the workers and communities that will be affected by the decommissioning of the plant's reactors.

Indian Point's Unit 1 nuclear reactor ceased operating in 1974, and Entergy, the facility's corporate owner, is set to shut down Unit 3 next year. Afterwards, Entergy is expected to transfer the plant for decommissioning to Holtec International.

"The decommissioning of a nuclear power plant is very new to the State of New York—the process is complicated, dangerous, and plays out over decades," said Galef. "While the individual stakeholder may come and go, the state will be able to act on behalf of New Yorkers through a newly proposed oversight board comprised of New York State agency heads. The state has the authority, the resources, the expertise, and the desire to be an active participant and to ensure that the best interest of New Yorkers is always in mind. In a new industry with few rules and less oversight, New York State will lead by example and ensure accountability."

Added Harckham, "The closing of Indian Point will impact the region and its residents in many ways, and being prepared to mitigate the economic effects while also safeguarding our environment needs to be a priority. If we don't put in due diligence now, there will be little to no chance to reverse or correct mistakes made and harmful situations that arise.

Assemblywoman Galef and I both understand what is at stake here—and why appropriate actions are necessary now. We'll make our legislative efforts a top priority and do everything possible to make sure they get passed in this session."

Of great concern, Galef and Harckham noted, is the obvious need for professional maintenance of the facility during its transition and decommissioning; and the need to

ensure that the present workforce is protected and included in the future dismantling of the facility.

Last year, Galef and Harckham both introduced legislation, which went unsigned by the governor, to minimize the negative impact to the workforce during this transition by requiring the decommissioning company to hire from the existing pool of Indian Point workers first. It also declared the energy facility to be a prevailing wage site, so employees will be paid commensurate with what they are making now. This legislation was resubmitted to both the Assembly and Senate earlier this year.

The financial implications to the local community from Indian Point's closing are expected to be sizable. The municipal tax base and local school district funding have long been supported by the energy facility, and maintaining a good portion of that support is crucial, especially in light of unforeseen municipal costs incurred during the novel coronavirus pandemic.

To steady tax revenues for the Town of Cortlandt, Village of Buchanan and Hendrick Hudson School District during the transition, legislation has been introduced to include spent fuel and the fuel casks at the nuclear facility as part of its real property tax assessment. Otherwise, market value of the non-operating plant will adversely affect the assessment and create an unmanageable revenue gap for these tax-funded entities. Similar legislation was introduced last year but did not advance to the governor.

Finally, Galef and Harckham have introduced legislation to create a statewide board to oversee the decommissioning of Indian Point. This legislation (A.10236 / S.8154) would bring New York State to the table to oversee and monitor the decommissioning of any nuclear plant in the state.

Decommissioning is a multifaceted process of deactivating and removing a nuclear power plant: it requires years, if not decades, of meticulous work. With so much at stake during decommissioning, the two lawmakers feel the state has a vested interest in ensuring that it is done safely, efficiently, and completely.

The proposed oversight board, comprised of state officials and experts in the field, will enable New York to monitor the decommissioning process in all of its complexity. The board will deal with key aspects of decommissioning, including legal, financial, environmental, and economic concerns. This will allow the state to bring together the necessary resources and expertise to effectively oversee the decommissioning process.

Galef and Harckham also noted that legislators are working with the New York Public Service Commission to revamp annual funding of the state-wide cessation fund, which offers grants to local government entities dealing with property tax losses from utility shutdowns. Both agree that funding of the program with a charge paid by utility companies statewide is preferable to trying find support in the general fund at budget time. “We need to ensure a sustainable, predictable inflow of money into the fund annually,” said Harckham.