



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

Senator O'Mara's weekly column 'From the Capitol' ~ for the week of March 21, 2022 ~ 'Time for NYers to find out about the Hochul energy plan'

THOMAS F. O'MARA March 22, 2022

| ISSUE: **ENERGY AFFORDABILITY**



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Senator O'Mara offers his weekly perspective on many of the key challenges and issues facing the Legislature, as well as on legislative actions, local initiatives, state programs and policies, and more. Stop back every Monday for Senator O'Mara's latest column...

This week, **"Time for NYers to find out about the Hochul energy plan"**

In January, thousands of this state's citizens -- particularly farmers and the entire farming community -- turned out for one of the most consequential public comment periods that there has ever been in New York State.

Specifically, the state's Farm Wage Board held a series of virtual hearings to hear testimony on whether to reduce the farmworker overtime threshold from 60 hours to 40 hours. It's a move that could change agriculture as we have known it for generations, and farmers turned out in force to make their voices heard in opposition to lowering the threshold. I was proud to join them.

The final decision still sits in the hands of Governor Kathy Hochul, but she knows where so many of us stand.

A few weeks from now, this state will open yet another series of public hearings as part of a public comment period that will ultimately affect New Yorkers in every community and from all walks of life in profound ways.

It's time to pay attention.

New York State's Climate Action Council (CAC) has just released a schedule for 10 public hearings on a plan that I have been warning will shock New Yorkers when they begin to find out more about it.

Consequently, my colleagues and I in the state Senate Republican Conference have been calling on all New Yorkers to get involved and submit official public comment on the CAC's draft scoping plan for remaking New York's energy future.

The CAC plans eight in-person and two virtual hearings to receive public input on their plan. The first hearing is scheduled for Tuesday, April 5, in New York City. The final, virtual hearing is slated for Wednesday, May 11. Pre-registration is encouraged, but not required, for the in-person hearings. Written comments can be submitted. Find out more on the CAC website: climate.ny.gov.

I have encouraged New York's efforts to increase cleaner and renewable power, but I also have been outspoken over the past few years that New York's push to achieve aggressive renewable energy goals through the "Climate Leadership and Climate Protection Act" (CLCPA), signed into law in

2019, will come at great cost and consequences for local communities, economies, and residents.

It has been estimated that implementing the plan will cost taxpayers upwards of \$300 billion -- and that is the advocates' price tag.

In the end, the cost would likely skyrocket far beyond that number.

New York State is traveling at breakneck speed to radically remake New York's energy future. It will be enormously expensive for state and local taxpayers, to mention nothing of residential and business utility ratepayers.

It holds far-reaching consequences for the state and local economies and communities. For starters, it seeks 70% renewable electricity statewide by 2030, just eight short years from now. The state's current electricity source mix is only 8% wind and solar, on a good day.

New Yorkers are going to be shocked when they're hit in the pocketbook and see the extreme alterations to their everyday lives.

We need a fuller discussion of what these actions potentially mean in the important context of feasibility, affordability, and reliability. At a cost of hundreds of billions of dollars to New Yorkers and untold costs to the economy, we are barreling full speed ahead to further crush the affordability of living for families, drive up the cost of doing business, and destroy economic opportunity.

Furthermore, up to now, the state has been planning it all, largely, behind the scenes. There has been no honest and detailed cost-benefit analysis.

The upcoming hearings present the first direct opportunities for the public at large to tune in and be heard. When more and more citizens, communities, businesses, families, and workers begin to understand where New York's energy future is headed in the very near future, I firmly believe it will cause a backlash that could help drive a badly needed rethinking, dose of reality, and slowing down of this out-of-control process.

The CLCPA created the CAC to develop a draft plan for implementing the law. The Senate GOP has been highlighting the plan's extreme efforts to eliminate reliable, affordable sources of energy. Natural gas hookups and services, as well as those from propane and heating oil, are vital for New Yorkers -- especially in rural communities and during harsh winters -- and cutting off these dependable sources of energy would be costly to residents and businesses and ineffective on a global scale.

It's critically important to be aware of what's taking place here. Among many other provisions, the CAC blueprint calls for:

--No new gas service to existing buildings, beginning in 2024;

--No natural gas within newly constructed buildings, beginning in 2024;

--No new natural gas appliances for home heating, cooking, water heating, clothes drying beginning in 2030;

--No gasoline-automobile sales by 2035;

--No sales of gasoline powered landscaping equipment, i.e. lawnmowers, chain saws, wood chippers by 2027;

--Installing onsite solar or joining a community renewables program by 2040; and

--Installing geothermal heating by 2040.

Furthermore, the overall direction of the plan anticipates job losses and negative impacts to school and local government property tax bases. Proposals have been put forth to establish a "Just Fund" that would provide compensation for displaced workers up to three years of wages, and payments to school districts and local governments for lost tax revenues resulting from industries being shuttered. Proposals have been introduced that would increase gasoline costs by an additional 55-cents-per-gallon tax and drive up home heating fuel by 26%.

Millions of homeowners could be facing, in a very near future, having to convert their natural gas, propane, or heating fuel oil furnaces to electric at estimated costs of as much as \$40,000 per household.

In just five years, 2027, you will no longer be able to build a new home or building in New York State with a natural gas, propane, or fuel oil furnace or boiler.

I will reiterate that New York State is already an absolute leader in this arena, as we should be, accounting for just 0.4% of global carbon emissions. The CLCPA applies only to New York -- not to neighboring states or, even more importantly, to China, India or Russia, which account for 40% of global emissions.

In other words, even if New York State does reach zero emissions, it will have zero impact on the global climate at large nor the climate change impacts on us here in New York, such as extreme

storms and flooding -- but it will come at great cost to all of us.

New Yorkers now have until June 10, 2022 to submit formal public comments on the proposed energy plan. Comments can be made at any of the scheduled hearings as well as in writing. Find out more at: <https://climate.ny.gov/CAC-Meetings-and-Materials>.

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