



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

Senator O'Mara's weekly column 'From the Capitol' ~ for the week of April 11, 2022 ~ 'Hearings on the Hochul energy plan underway. Tune in.'

THOMAS F. O'MARA April 12, 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, "Hearings on the Hochul energy plan underway. Tune in."

ALBANY, April 11, 2022 -- Governor Kathy Hochul and Albany's Democrat-controlled Legislature were still putting the last touches on a final state budget at the time this column was being written -- and so I'll hold on any final reactions or analyses of New York's new fiscal plan.

It is clear, however, that New York's new budget will be defined as the highest-spending state fiscal plan in history and it will not provide anything near the scope of permanent tax, mandate or regulatory relief that this state needs.

At the moment, the bottom-line reaction is that we will be confronting the consequences of this upcoming budget for years to come.

Nevertheless, it's more than worth a reminder that one of New York State's most consequential public comment periods is underway.

In my view -- even in the face of the ongoing uncertainty surrounding the 2022-23 state budget -- nothing else occurring in state government right now will have a greater impact on everyday lives over the coming decade.

It's that important.

I have detailed my deep concerns in previous columns and other public forums, which you can find on my Senate website, omara.nysenate.gov, and, consequently, I'll get to the most immediate and straightforward point here: Find out more.

Specifically, what's known as the state's "Climate Action Council" (CAC) has begun a series of 10 public hearings on a plan that I have warned will arrive as a shock to New Yorkers when they begin to find out more about it.

Over the next several weeks, the CAC plans eight in-person and two virtual hearings to receive public input on their plan. The first hearing was held last week 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.

While I have fully encouraged New York's efforts to increase cleaner and renewable power -- efforts, by the way, that have already made our state a leader in this arena -- I have also called for extreme caution.

I have warned 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.

More specifically, it's being done without most New Yorkers knowing a thing about it. The state has been planning it all, largely, behind the scenes.

Now, however, this series of public hearings needs to be broadcast far and wide.

Simply put, it represents a radical remaking of New York's energy future that will be enormously expensive for state and local taxpayers, especially residential and business utility ratepayers.

I have warned that 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.

The hearings underway 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, it could spark a backlash and help drive a badly needed rethinking and slowing down of this 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.

Furthermore, the plan anticipates job losses and negative impacts to school and local government property tax bases. It anticipates industries being shuttered and subsequent job losses. To help the state afford it, 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%.

In the very near future, millions of homeowners could be forced 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.

New York State is already an absolute leader in this arena -- like we should be -- accounting for just 0.4% of global carbon emissions. The CLCPA applies only to New York. It will have no bearing on the actions of neighboring states or, even more critically, to China, India or Russia, which account for 40% of global emissions.

In other words, even if New York State does reach zero emissions, there will be zero impact on our own climate or the global climate at large -- yet it will come at enormous cost.

New Yorkers 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. The following link can be used to submit public comments: <https://climate.ny.gov/Our-Climate-Act/Draft-Scoping-Plan>.