

Facing the Energy Crunch



Working
Together
to Find
Solutions



A Report from New York State Senator

Toby Ann Stavisky

• 16th Senate District •



Dear Friend:

New Yorkers — and all Americans — are facing skyrocketing gasoline and energy costs, exacerbated by the tragedies wrought by recent Gulf Coast hurricanes. While we in the Legislature should do our part to enact legislation that will spur conservation, save consumers money on soaring gasoline and home energy costs, and encourage more reliance on alternative fuel and energy sources, we must ALL work together to find solutions to our energy problems.

Confronted with the steady rise in energy costs on all fronts, we must investigate dramatic increases in prices — price gouging during this time will not be tolerated, and must be dealt with severely — and focus on exploring and implementing comprehensive, effective solutions. Band-aids, while fine for minor cuts and scrapes, serve no purpose on a much more critical wound. We need to explore both sufficient short-term measures that can bring true relief, and long-term solutions to alleviate this energy crisis.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive that reads "Toby Ann Stavisky".
Toby Ann Stavisky

Conserve Electricity in Your Home

- Use three-way bulbs in all three-way lamps, keeping them at the lowest level, unless higher wattages are needed.
- Replace ordinary incandescent bulbs with compact fluorescent bulbs.
- Put timers on lights and appliances in your home to save energy.

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Albany Office • 504 Legislative Office Building, Albany, NY 12247 • (518) 455-3461

Quick Energy Fix-It

In less than four hours you can significantly reduce air infiltrations by installing gaskets at all electric switches and plugs. You can do an entire home for less than \$10. The process is simple: remove the cover plate, place the gasket, replace the cover plate. If you are handy with a screwdriver, this process can take less than 2 minutes — start to finish. To test for air leaks, hold your hand in front of the outlet. If you feel a draft, install foam gaskets behind the plates to stop the leak.

Know Your Energy Rights

Under New York State Law and the Home Energy Fair Practices Act, residential gas, electric and steam customers are guaranteed certain rights in areas such as:

- ◆ Application for service
- ◆ Billing and payment
- ◆ Suspension or termination of service
- ◆ Complaint procedures
- ◆ Utilities are required to provide customers with notification of their rights and responsibilities at least once a year with customers' bills

You may contact your utility provider to request a written description:

ConEd's Electrical Emergency

and billing question number is

1-800-75CONED

(1-800-752-6633)

The Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP)

HEAP assists lower-income individuals and families with heating costs in the winter. HEAP provides grants for heating bills ranging from \$40 to \$400 depending on a household's income, family size, living arrangement, heating expenses, type of heat, and presence of children under 6, adults aged 60 or over, and disabled individuals. Both renters and homeowners can be eligible for assistance.

Applications and eligibility information can be obtained by calling the **HEAP** hotline at **1-800-342-3009** or by visiting the site: www.otda.state.ny.us.

The Weatherization Assistance Program

New York State has the largest low-income residential energy conservation program in the nation. The Weatherization Assistance Program reduces the amount of energy required to heat homes and provide hot water, thereby helping save energy costs and increase comfort.

This program provides an energy audit of the home to identify specific needs, and provides services to weatherize the home. Services might include weatherstripping, repair or replacement of heating systems, replacement or repair of windows and/or doors, addition of insulation, and minor repairs.

Eligibility is based on household income, and both renters and homeowners are eligible. For more information, including qualifications and applications, contact our local weatherization provider:

The Community Environmental Center 718-784-1444

or by visiting the site:

www.cecenter.org

e-mail: info@cecenter.org

The Weatherization Assistance Program

or by visiting the site:

www.eere.energy.gov/wip



Tips to Lower Your Energy Bills

- ◆ Have your heating system checked by a professional annually. This will ensure that your system is working safely and efficiently which, in turn, will save you money.
- ◆ Make sure your home is properly insulated. If necessary, insulate the walls and attic. This will help to conserve energy and reduce your home's heating bills.
- ◆ Caulk and weather-strip doors and windowsills to keep cold air out.
- ◆ Install storm windows or cover windows with plastic from the inside. This will provide an extra layer of insulation, keeping more cold air out.
- ◆ Remove window air-conditioning units to prevent heat from escaping through and around the unit. If it can't be moved, put a cover over it to prevent drafts.
- ◆ Set your thermostat to 65 degrees or lower at night and 55 degrees when you are away. You can save 20% or more of your heating costs by lowering your thermostat by 10 degrees for two eight-hour periods a day. For each degree you lower the setting, you can save about 3% on your heating bills.
- ◆ Purchase a programmable thermostat that will automatically set the temperature for you.



Conserving Energy Inside Your Home

- ◆ Place heavy duty aluminum foil behind your steam radiator to reflect heat into the room.
- ◆ Install lined drapes or other dense window coverings.
- ◆ If your heat goes out during a winter storm, you can keep warm by closing off rooms you do not use.
- ◆ Dress in layers of lightweight clothing and wear a cap.
- ◆ Move furniture, draperies and carpeting away from electric baseboards.



Promoting Alternative Energy

Again, looking at the long-term, I support a plan that vigorously supports the use of alternative fuels and encourages conservation measures.

Over 2.6 million New York households rely on heating oil to warm their homes during the winter months. Our plan provides tax credits for homeowners using a home heating fuel blend that contains at least 20 percent biodiesel fuel, which burns more cleanly in home heating systems than it does in cars and trucks. Direct financial relief to New Yorkers who heat their homes with heating oil in turn will help spur the production of biofuels, helping us reduce our dependency on foreign oil.

The use of biodiesel fuel will also help reduce harmful emissions from heating oil boilers, which currently are responsible for emitting nearly 42,000 tons of sulfur dioxide every year.

Our plan would also result in helping many of New York's farmers since much of the alternative fuel sources (corn or soybeans) could be grown on Central New York's farms. We are also calling for reinstating the sales tax exemption and tax credits for the purchase of vehicles that obtain high gas mileage, and also for the elimination of Thruway tolls for these vehicles.



Additionally, we support the passage of legislation that would study a proposal to put solar panels on *one million* roofs in New York State. The proposal, like one currently being planned in the State of California, has the potential to slash energy costs to consumers by \$12 billion over 25 years, and add 3,000 megawatts of solar energy.

Energy Conservation

A huge component of our proposal incorporates conservation measures, along with improved planning.

I support legislation that provides a sales tax exemption for purchase of new Energy Star appliances to encourage energy efficiency, reduce utility costs and conserve the state's water and energy resources.



To also encourage conservation efforts, our plan would allow SONYMA (low-income home financing agency) to provide low/no cost home improvement loans to be used for energy efficiency upgrades.

I favor reinstating a State Energy Office (eliminated in 1995) to protect consumers by becoming a central repository on energy-related matters, acting as a conductor of public education programs promoting energy conservation, and formulating policies that would promote cost saving measures like forming home heating fuel buying cooperatives for seniors and working families.

New York State's Energy Plan, which established a State Energy Planning Board and provisions for a plan of action, expired in 2003. It was very short-sighted to let this law expire without renewal. I favor legislation that would reinstate a plan that includes the implementation of conservation measures, energy forecasts, and long-range planning, to help us avert crises in the future.
