

Senator Pam Helming

Representing the 54th New York Senate District



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A COLUMN FROM STATE SENATOR PAM HELMING

The Road to Renewable Energy Should Not Be Paved With Higher Taxes

We're all familiar with the saying, "Don't judge a book by its cover." I've got another one. Don't judge a bill by its title. Often, legislation introduced in Albany has a nice ring to it. But the devil is in the details.

Senate bill S.4264A is called the Climate and Community Investment Act. Sounds good, right? Its intent is to accelerate the transition to renewable energy in New York. But how the bill would accomplish that is where it goes very wrong.

The legislation would add a carbon tax of \$55 per ton on fossil fuel users. During a recent hearing, The Business Council of New York State estimated this would increase the cost of gas by as much as 55 cents per gallon, and increase the cost of residential natural gas by 26 percent.

That's thousands of dollars in higher costs for virtually every resident and business in the state.

New Yorkers already pay some of the highest gas taxes in the nation, and the highest taxes, period. Now, at least 23 Senate Democrats who are sponsoring this bill want you to pay more.

That's astounding to me, especially after they approved a state budget that increased taxes to historic levels, and when many families and small businesses are already struggling.

This new gas tax would impact seniors and lower income residents the most. It would especially affect Upstate New Yorkers, and people in our rural communities, who rely on cars to drive to work or get their kids to school or day care.

Under this legislation, if you use gas or diesel in your vehicle, you'll pay more. If you heat your home with natural gas, fuel oil or propane, you'll pay more. If you power your manufacturing business with heating oil or propane, you'll pay more.

And consider the ripple effects. For example, the cost of transporting food and other goods would go up. Those costs are likely to be borne by consumers, who are already paying more for food and household essentials.

Local families, seniors, farmers and businesses can't afford this. The state can't afford this if it wants to compete for economic investment and jobs.

We can't expect families to purchase a \$30,000 electric vehicle or invest upwards of \$20,000 in a new home heating system. We can't expect businesses just getting back on their feet to pay even higher prices and absorb even more mandates.

The argument that lower-income households and some small businesses will get a rebate or a credit is foolish. Hardworking New Yorkers don't need yet another rebate from the state. They need the government to stop taking their hard-earned money.

Furthermore, the recent hearing on this bill included only two representatives from the business sector. We need the input of the Farm Bureau, manufacturers, hospitals, municipal water and sewer treatment plants, and others who would face significantly higher costs under this proposal.

That is why I am urging my colleagues in the Senate Majority to hit the pause button on this bill and ensure all constituencies are heard before we take a vote.

If this proposal becomes law, it may or may not accelerate the adoption of renewable energy. But it will most certainly accelerate the costly loss of people, businesses and jobs from Upstate New York.

I have always been a strong proponent of protecting our environment. But raising costs for taxpayers and job creators is not the way to do it.

The road to renewable energy should not be paved with higher taxes. Please consider joining me to "Stop the Gas Tax" by signing the petition on my website at helming.nysenate.gov.

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Pam Helming represents the 54th District in the New York State Senate.