



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

Senator O'Mara's weekly column 'From the Capitol' -- for the week of October 23, 2023 -- 'More warnings about the costs of NY's energy mandates'

THOMAS F. O'MARA October 23, 2023

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Senator O'Mara offers his weekly perspective on many of the key challenges and issues facing the Legislature.

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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, "**More warnings about the costs of NY's energy mandates**"

Last week, two actions by the state's top energy regulator, the Public Service Commission (PSC), continued to highlight a growing and undeniable reality: the Albany Democrats' irrational rush to implement far-reaching, radical Green New Deal mandates is not affordable, feasible, or sustainable for ratepayers, taxpayers, or the state and local economies.

It's what many of us have been saying all along, from the day that the "Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act" was signed into law in 2019. Remember some of the energy mandates set in motion by the CLCPA:

- No natural gas within newly constructed buildings, beginning in 2025;
- No new gas service to existing buildings, beginning in 2030;
- No replacement natural gas appliances for home heating, cooking, water heating, clothes drying beginning in 2035; and
- No gasoline-automobile sales in New York by 2035.

Green New Dealers want 70 percent renewable energy by 2030 and zero emissions by 2040 -- despite our state emissions accounting for just 0.4% of total global emissions. And recognizing that, even if we get to zero, at astronomical expense and devastation to New York's economy, we will have zero impact on global climate.

I've called it a perfect storm of higher costs and dire consequences -- and that's exactly what's beginning to play out, including within the PSC last week.

On the one hand, the PSC rightly denied requests from solar and wind developers for a 100% increase of "state" (aka, you the ratepayer) subsidies to move forward on previously agreed-upon renewable energy development projects. I applaud the PSC's decision to say "No" to wind energy developers seeking to gouge state ratepayers and taxpayers to move forward on the massive projects necessary to try to satisfy Governor Hochul and the Albany Democrat supermajorities' mad dash to zero emissions in New York.

The business and taxpayer advocacy coalition Upstate United said, "We have called for transparency relating to the price tag of the CLCPA from the start, especially since Upstate residents continue to shoulder the lion's share of these ballooning costs, while downstate receives nearly 100% of the benefit. This decision protects New Yorkers from a dangerous precedent of allowing developers to dictate the CLCPA's aggressive timeline by pressuring policymakers and attempting to amend already executed and approved contracts."

Unfortunately, on the other hand, the PSC did approve significant rate increases for the New York State Electric & Gas Corporation (NYSEG) and the Rochester Gas and Electric Corporation (RGE). According to reports, the cumulative, three-year increase will total in excess of 31% for NYSEG electric customers over the next 30 months. That's more than \$30 per month to the "average" ratepayer; 50% of ratepayers will be in excess of that monthly amount.

The Governor and the PSC consider this a win because the utilities were seeking an increase twice that. Don't kid yourself, your utility rates will skyrocket far more than this as the Albany Democrat Green New Deal is ratcheted up. These increases will also be felt in the increasing costs of everything else as business and industry utility rates are increasing at an

even higher percentage. Keep in mind that we are just in the very early stage of implementing this Green New Deal.

On this front, the PSC failed to recognize the impact of massive rate hikes on seniors, families, businesses, and every ratepayer already hard-pressed by the excessive cost of living in New York State. New York is already recognized as one of the least affordable states in America (a recent poll showed that 80% of New Yorkers identify the cost of living as the top issue facing this state) and these unfair and unreasonable increases in energy costs will only make it worse. It's bad timing, to say the least, and it's going to be a hard hit for every ratepayer. The PSC has simply failed to recognize and understand the short- and long-term consequences across the Southern Tier, Finger Lakes, Central New York, Western New York and throughout Upstate New York.

Keep in mind, however, that the utility companies argue that the rate increases are necessary, in large part, to afford the infrastructure demands they're facing to keep pace with the CLCPA mandates and timeline.

In other words, it's the sounding of yet another alarm that it's time to slow down this process, reassess and reexamine the CLCPA timeline and mandates, and finally undertake a thorough and transparent analysis of what the impact will be on ratepayers, taxpayers, and local economies across New York if the Albany Democrats stay this course.

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