



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

Senator O'Mara's weekly column 'From the Capitol' -- for the week of March 25, 2024 -- 'Welcome to New York's climate crisis'

THOMAS F. O'MARA March 25, 2024

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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, "**Welcome to New York's climate crisis**"

It was back to the races for Senate Democrats at the Capitol last week -- the race, that is, to see who can be first to inflict yet another energy mandate on New Yorkers.

In fact, since the 2019 enactment of what's known as the "Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act," we've watched the one-party control of the Albany Democrats move at world record speed trying to pile one unaffordable mandate on top of another unworkable mandate on top of the next unrealistic mandate in their race to try to inflict the devastating consequences of a zero-emissions economy on this entire state.

As this state's energy strategy currently stands, it's a race to unaffordability and to run manufacturing out of the state. Yet they were at it again last week with the approval of a piece of legislation known as the "New York Heat Act." For her part, Governor Hochul included a version of the same legislation in her proposed state budget and calls it the "Affordable Gas Transition Act."

There will be nothing affordable about it. That's the point our Senate and Assembly Republican conferences have been making since the start of this disaster in the making five years ago. Natural gas bans. All-electric school bus fleets. No sales of gasoline-powered vehicles. Round and round the Albany Democrats go and you know the rest, nobody knows where they're going to stop.

What we do know, what's becoming as clear as the clearest sky, is that we're all going to pay a heavy, heavy price once the bills truly start coming due -- and it's going to be a cold, hard truth.

During a news conference Senate Republicans held after the Senate Democrats approved the Heat Act last week ([you can view the full news conference on omara.nysenate.gov](https://www.omara.nysenate.gov)), I once again stressed the important reality that keeps getting overlooked (or ignored) by the other side: Albany Democrats 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 could somehow get to zero through the imposition of these drastic, draconian measures imposing untold hardships on New York's communities, residents, industries, and local economies, it will have virtually zero impact on the statewide, national, or global climate.

Furthermore, it will require gigantic taxpayer-funded, government subsidies, impose heavier and heavier burdens on ratepayers, and fuel a whole new set of environmental consequences and crises, many of them currently unforeseen. And again, our state-level actions on their own -- our solo, utopian leap into the energy unknown -- will make a pittance of a difference to addressing the global climate challenge.

Many of us have called it a perfect storm of higher costs and drastic consequences and that's exactly what's playing out.

The bottom line is that we can't continue to overlook the better because we want the perfect. The perfect does not exist.

The Heat Act, for example, calls for capping utility costs for 25 percent of the lowest-income New Yorkers, according to the plan's supporters. What they don't highlight is that the funding needed to continue to operate the state's energy grid will come out of the pockets of the 75 percent of the ratepayers who won't receive any assistance under the legislation. In other words, a small group of citizens will benefit while hard-working, middle-class families largely bear the burden. Further, the Heat Act would eliminate the "100-foot rule" for gas service and put at risk thousands of local jobs for utility workers.

New York State consumes less total energy per capita than all but two other states. New York State's per capita energy consumption for the transportation sector is the lowest in the nation. In 2020, New York State's per capita energy-related carbon dioxide emissions were lower than those of any other state; but then the Albany Democrats closed the Indian Point nuclear energy plant and CO2 emissions have increased over 40% in the New York City area since the closure.

New York State has been a champion in this arena and we should continue to be a leader on reducing emissions, yet it has become fundamentally important to keep sounding the alarm that the all-Democrat energy strategy as it stands is not realistic or achievable, it's not responsible or rational, it lacks critical foresight, and it unreasonably risks energy grid reliability and affordability.

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