



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

Senator O'Mara's weekly column 'From the Capitol' -- for the week of May 20, 2024 -- 'Pay attention to where the state's energy policies are headed'

THOMAS F. O'MARA May 20, 2024

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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, **"Pay attention to where state's energy policies are headed"**

**We can't afford to let this one fly under the radar and so it remains worthwhile to warn, once again, as many of us have been warning throughout the past several years, that the Albany Democrat climate agenda currently moving forward across this state is a perfect storm of unaffordability, unfeasibility, and unreliability.**

**It cannot be stressed enough: Since the 2019 enactment of what's known as the "Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act" (CLCPA), we've watched Albany Democrats move at world record speed to pile one unaffordable mandate on top of another unworkable mandate on top of the next unrealistic mandate trying to inflict a zero-emissions economy on this entire state -- and altogether these actions will come with a devastating price tag and consequences for ratepayers and taxpayers, businesses and industries, school districts, farmers, local economies, and more.**

**Earlier this year, for example, I joined legislative colleagues and school district representatives, including Horseheads Central School District Superintendent Dr. Thomas Douglas, to focus on just one fast-moving state energy mandate requiring, starting in 2027, that all school buses purchased in this state be electric. We stood together to warn that it is projected to be the most expensive unfunded state mandate *to ever hit* local school districts and property taxpayers. I have introduced legislation (S8220/A8447), sponsored in the state Assembly by area Assemblyman Phil Palmesano, to immediately delay this mandate and do what should have been done long before passing it, which is to undertake a thorough cost-benefit analysis; take other actions to ensure affordability, feasibility, and reliability; and be forthright with taxpayers and ratepayers on what this is going to cost them.**

**Keep in mind that the all-electric school bus mandate is just one of numerous energy mandates already in the state's pipeline and on the way to hit all New Yorkers extremely hard in the very near future, including:**

**> 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 by 2035.

The overriding point for those of us who have been warning about these looming mandates is not that we don't believe New York State should be moving toward cleaner and more renewable energy, because that's simply not the truth. We do believe it and we have supported actions that already make New York State a national leader.

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.

The important reality that keeps getting overlooked (or ignored) by the other side is that 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.

The latest Empire Center report warns that the costs to New Yorkers could well prove to be over \$1 trillion by 2050 -- and that's in a state already recognized as one of the nation's least affordable places to live, one of America's highest taxed and regulated states, and the state that is losing population faster than any other in the country.

Consequently, as we move into the final weeks of the current legislative session, we cannot let this fly under the radar of public attention and scrutiny.

The all-Democrat energy strategy as it stands is not realistic or achievable. It is not responsible or rational. It lacks critical foresight, and it unreasonably risks energy grid reliability and affordability.

At the very least, it demands reassessment and reexamination before it's too late.