



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

George D. Maziarz

Senator Maziarz co-authors op-ed with T. Boone Pickens in support of liquefied natural gas

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These days, just mention the term "natural gas" and it immediately generates controversy in New York. If New Yorkers don't want the economic benefits of shale gas, that's up to them, but it is a shame not to take advantage of this important natural resource to create upstate jobs and promote cleaner air.

Lost and confused in all the heated debate on drilling for shale gas is that New York is on the cusp of missing the tremendous economic and environmental benefits of using a safe, reliable and inexpensive form of natural gas — liquefied natural gas in transportation.

Across the country, long haul trucks and other fleet vehicles are saving fuel costs and reducing dangerous greenhouse gas emissions by switching from engines that burn dirty, imported diesel to those that run on cleaner, domestic LNG.

To facilitate this transition, the private sector is stepping forward to build the infrastructure for a nationwide network of LNG refueling stations along major interstate trucking routes. This network will allow America's truckers and fleet operators to convert their vehicles to a cleaner and less expensive fuel, thereby reducing the cost of goods movement while improving air quality.

Unfortunately, while progress is being made across the country, there is one big gap on the map.

Today, an outdated law has made New York the only state in America that bans the use of LNG. A 1973 fire at an LNG facility in Staten Island led to the imposition of the state ban that remains in effect 30 years later.

Since that time, LNG technology has advanced significantly, and independent studies, including a 1998 report commissioned by the state, have concluded that the earlier fire was actually not linked to LNG at all.

A lack of understanding and just plain old inertia has led to a statewide ban remaining in place.

The net effect is not only bad news for truckers and consumers; it also deprives major upstate New York manufacturers of an affordable energy source to power their factories, putting into question their future ability to compete. Finally, the World Health Organization has classified diesel emissions as carcinogens, which means the ban is even worse news for the many — especially those who are economically disadvantaged and are located near congestion points for heavy truck traffic.

New York has long been a leader in protecting the environment with forward-looking energy policies. Over a decade ago the MTA and the state embarked on a groundbreaking program to improve air quality by replacing diesel buses with compressed natural gas vehicles.

That program, implemented with the broad bipartisan support of policy makers, industry and environmental advocates, has been a tremendous success.

Today, we are building that same coalition to support lifting the LNG ban outside the confines of New York City.

Lifting the ban makes sense: LNG is less expensive than diesel fuel; it is safe, actually less flammable than the propane tank that fuels your gas grill; in the wake of Superstorm Sandy it contributes to the state's policy of realizing fuel diversity and Cummins-Westport, a thriving upstate manufacturer, makes the cutting edge LNG engines that will be deployed in trucks, meaning jobs and investment. Finally, LNG engines produce 20 to 23 percent less greenhouse gas emissions than their diesel counterparts.

For all these reasons, we support legislation, which was overwhelmingly passed in the Senate last week, to lift the ban on LNG in all of the areas of the Empire State outside of the city of New York.

T. Boone Pickens is chairman and CEO of BP Capital and architect of the Pickens Plan, an energy plan for America. State Sen. George D. Maziarz, R-Newfane, is chairman of the Energy & Telecommunications Committee.