



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Elaine Phillips

Senator Phillips Joins Nassau County Executive To Call On Governor To Halt All Permits To Reopen Queens Wells Until USGS Study Complete

ELAINE PHILLIPS February 1, 2018



Senator Elaine Phillips joined Nassau County Executive Laura Curran, local elected officials, municipal water suppliers and environmental groups today to call on Governor Cuomo to halt the reactivation of 68 dormant wells in Queens that would draw from Long Island's sole source aquifer.

“Ensuring that our Long Island drinking water remains safe for current residents and future generations has been a top priority of mine since I assumed office,” Senator Phillips said. The reactivation of these wells presents a serious threat to Long Island’s sole source aquifer, and a renewal for New York City could be a denial of Long Islanders’ right to clean water. It is truly gratifying to see the broad representation of groups here today which reaffirms that this is an issue that affects all Long Islanders.”

Senator Phillips has sent correspondence over the last few months to Governor Cuomo requesting the reactivation of the wells be halted until completion of a USGS study to ensure all risks to groundwater safety are fully scrutinized and understood.

“The wells, which have lay dormant for years, have the potential to affect our groundwater in unknown and potentially dangerous ways, and could allow saltwater intrusion or the diversion of underground toxic plumes into the most vulnerable resource we have here on Long Island – our water supply,” continued Senator Phillips. “Governor Cuomo must put Long Island first when it comes to protecting our water and reject any re-permitting of the Queens wells.”

In June, the New York State Senate passed Senator Phillips legislation (S.6716), restricting the DEC’s ability to issue certain renewal permits for the 68 wells. Renewals would be limited to an emergency need due to water supply shortages and prolonged multi-year drought conditions. The measure stalled in the Assembly.

Long Island’s drinking water supply is unique from the rest of the state and New York City. Outside of Long Island, virtually all communities have access to numerous lakes, rivers, and streams for an abundant supply of fresh drinking water, including New York City, which has access to large Upstate reservoirs.

Long Island, however, is limited by a different set of circumstances. Devoid of large lakes, rivers, and streams, and without access to remote reservoirs, the three million residents of Nassau and Suffolk Counties depend entirely on groundwater aquifers for the hundreds of millions of gallons of water used daily.

In 2016, a partnership between New York State, the United States Geological Survey (USGS), and Nassau and Suffolk Counties was announced to study the long-term effective management of Long Island's groundwater resource. The study includes an in-depth review of the Queens wells and their potential impacts on Long Island's groundwater safety.