



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

George M. Borrello

## Statement by Senator George Borrello on the State's New Renewable Energy Siting Process

GEORGE M. BORRELLO December 1, 2020

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“At last evening’s public hearing, I spoke in strong opposition to the New York State Office of Renewable Energy Siting’s (ORES) proposed regulations for the accelerated renewable energy permitting process. Promoted by the Governor and passed by the New York City-controlled majorities of the State Legislature as a way to fast track the siting and construction of renewable energy projects, the new rules are designed to replace a thorough, inclusive process with a swift, standardized, and bureaucratically-driven one. At the core of

this shift is a violation of our State Constitution's home rule provisions and right of local self-governance, longstanding precedents which recognize the geographic, political and economic diversity of our state.

"Even those who agree with the merits of these projects should be concerned at the Constitutional infringement and suppression of community input that are at stake here. The previous Article 10 permitting process, which provided some meaningful opportunities for communities to be engaged in the siting process, has been discarded because it proved to be an inconvenience to the state's politically-driven energy goals and the crony capitalism that is driving them. The due diligence that local governments invested in reviewing, vetting and debating these projects will now, essentially, disappear and with it, any expectation that most local residents will regard these projects with anything other than mistrust and opposition.

"We've just gone through an election cycle where the Governor and his allies loudly proclaimed the importance of "counting every vote," and guarding against disenfranchising even a single voice. Yet, as has become clear on this issue, when that democratic principle proves to be a political hindrance, the commitment to it evaporates. As we see time and again here in New York, the only voices the Governor believes are worthy are those who agree with him.

"The beautiful farmland and natural resources that have defined the character and enriched the quality of life of Western and Upstate New York for centuries are threatened both aesthetically and ecologically by industrial wind and solar installations. These new regulations will truncate existing environmental reviews, relax noise standards and discount public health concerns. Promises of economic benefits for property owners and communities will be inadequate to offset our losses in terms of property values, quality of life, tourism and many intangibles. These sacrifices are being made to support a bogus

political agenda that doesn't even begin to move the needle when it comes to addressing climate change. In fact, with the record amount of power now being imported into New York from states like Pennsylvania, to back up these renewable energy projects, we are actually creating more pollution and greenhouse gas emissions to support this costly "green" agenda.

"While these regulations will likely move forward with a rubber stamp, it will be difficult for developers to plan and execute successful projects and harmonious relationships with host communities if they disregard local concerns and recommendations. To that end, my voice, and those of others opposed to these projects, will not be silenced by these new regulations."

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