



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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Schumer, Gianaris, Ramos, Mamdani, And Cabán Slam NRG'S Proposed Power Plant Overhaul In Astoria, Urging Community Members To Join Opposition Against Dirty Fuel Power Plant Before DEC Deadline Of August 29

MICHAEL GIANARIS July 9, 2021

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ASTORIA, N.Y. - With the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) opening the public comment period into the proposed overhaul of the dirty-fuel powered Astoria NRG power plant, U.S. Senator Charles Schumer announced his opposition to the proposal. The proposed power plant would be located at the heart of Astoria's "Asthma Alley"—a corridor through Astoria and Long Island City known for abnormally high childhood asthma rates and an overconcentration of

New York City's power generating plants. The proposed overhaul could also undermine the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA), a nation-leading state law enacted in 2019 that aims to reduce New York's carbon pollution.

Senator Schumer was joined by longtime project opponent and CLCPA champion, New York State Senate Deputy Leader Michael Gianaris, as well as State Senator Jessica Ramos, Assembly Member Zohran Mamdani, and Tiffany Cabán, organizers against the plant and climate justice leaders, along with other activists, organizers, and advocates.

“For too long, the people of western Queens have borne the brunt of the consequences of being home to far too many of New York’s pollution-belching power plants – that needs to stop today,” **said U.S. Senator Charles E. Schumer.** “A rebuilt NRG plant that will keep a fossil fuel-dependent power plant in Astoria for years to come would directly undermine the urgently needed goals laid out in New York’s groundbreaking climate law, the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act. A law I was proud to champion. I am also proud to stand with great local leaders and activists who are fighting for climate justice, and we won’t stop until we power-down this dangerous plan.”

“Given the severity of the climate crisis, no new fossil fuel plants should be getting built, period. I will continue working with my community to fight against this ill-conceived project until it is finally dead. I’m glad we are joined in this fight by Leader Schumer because failure is not an option,” **said New York State Senate Deputy Leader Michael Gianaris.**

“Western Queens has been breathing polluted air for far too long and it has had damaging effects on the health of our community and environment. If New York wants to remain a leader in climate issues we need to stop burning fossil fuels,” **said State Senator Jessica Ramos.** We are grateful to Senator Schumer for joining in our fight against the NRG Plant and for standing with our communities’ right to a fair process and to breathe clean air.”

“Every day, I see my neighbors across Astoria suffer from some of the worst air quality in our city and we have the asthma rates to show for it. Enough is enough; we are sick and tired of investments being made in dirty fossil fuels when we can build clean energy today. I’m proud to stand with Astorians and our elected officials at every level of government to demand the DEC reject the NRG’s proposal for a new fracked gas peaker plant. We should not be building new fossil fuel plants in Astoria, or anywhere across New York State,” **said Assembly Member Zohran K. Mamdani.**

“Here in Astoria, we produce about half of the power generated by New York City, and we are paying the price for that power: times two. We are overpaying corporations, and we are bearing the brunt of the pollution,” said **Tiffany Cabán**. “Our community is saying loudly and clearly that we do not want the NRG Plant. These plants pollute the air, create “Asthma Alleys,” and spread and exacerbate respiratory health issues. This is about choosing people over pollution; people over pipelines; and, above all else, people over profits.”

Schumer explained that Astoria, Queens is home to multiple power-generating facilities. This has given the community the reputation of being New York City’s “Asthma Alley” – home to higher rates of asthma than elsewhere in the city. Schumer noted the densely populated nearby communities, including homeowners and tenants in Astoria and Long Island City, as well as some of the largest public housing developments in the nation at Queensbridge and Ravenswood. The overhaul of the Astoria NRG power plant would continue to exacerbate the problem, making the fight against asthma increasingly difficult, not to mention the fight against climate change and reducing carbon pollution, said Schumer.

The state legislature passed the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act ([CLCPA](#)) in 2019, a bill championed by Schumer and local electeds gathered today, to mitigate the effects of climate change by drastically cutting greenhouse gases, diverting the state’s energy reliance to renewable sources, and creating green jobs to promote environmental justice across New York State. The bill is the most comprehensive and aggressive climate change legislation in the nation. The law [targets](#) include an 85% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, 100% zero-emission electricity by 2040, and 70% renewable energy by 2030. The proposed overhaul of the NRG Astoria plant, which would be powered by fossil fuels, would be automatically in violation of the CLCPA and would require a waiver from the DEC to even operate.

This week, the state DEC opened their public comment period on the project’s draft permits. The public comment period lasts through August 29. Schumer joined local elected officials in urging local residents to participate in the public comment period, to let the DEC know they should reject the permits.

Schumer explained that the world’s leading energy organization, the International Energy Agency (IEA) has issued a strong warning on the immediate need to drastically scale back fossil fuels. [The Guardian](#) reported that “Exploitation and development of new oil and gas fields must stop this year and no new coal-fired power stations can be built if the world is to stay within safe limits of global heating and meet the goal of new zero emissions by 2050, the world’s leading

organization has said.” A rebuilt NRG plant that will keep a fossil fuel-dependent power plant in Astoria for years would not only undermine the goals laid out in the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act, but also the need to scale back fossil fuels to meet the new zero emissions goal by 2050, Schumer explained.