



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Brian Kavanagh

## Forwarding: Growing Number of Electeds Join Call for Governor Hochul to Review Gas Bill Hike

BRIAN KAVANAGH October 19, 2021

| ISSUE: PUBLIC UTILITIES, NATURAL GAS, NATIONAL GRID, PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION, NO NORTH BROOKLYN PIPELINE



**Growing number of electeds join call for Governor Hochul to review gas bill hike**  
*as community releases list of unanswered questions over National Grid's controversial fracked gas vaporizers proposed for Greenpoint Brooklyn*

Brooklyn, New York - On Tuesday morning, a growing number of elected officials from across downstate New York renewed their call for Governor Kathy Hochul to review the Public Service Commission's approval for National Grid to raise gas bills for 1.9 million

downstate customers.

The August PSC order will force customers to pay for the North Brooklyn Pipeline and other controversial fossil fuel projects. Several of the elected officials gathered outside the corporate utility's headquarters in downtown Brooklyn for a press conference said those projects violate the state's climate law.

"Environmental racism and the climate crisis are directly linked to the economic inequality hurting our Brooklyn communities. Our state's Public Service Commission should be protecting Cooper Park residents and all of our environmental justice communities by complying with the CLCPA," said State Senator Julia Salazar. "We need Governor Hochul to review the rate case and to reject the rate hike, and we need New York's Department of Environmental Conservation to honor the Climate Leadership & Community Protection Act and DENY National Grid's permits."

"I've joined more than 40,000 New Yorkers in voicing my grave concerns about the expansion of fossil fuel infrastructure in Brooklyn," said State Senator Brian Kavanagh. "In 2019, when we passed the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act, I was proud that our state had taken the most aggressive stance on climate action in the country. But we must follow through and properly implement that landmark legislation. Simply put, approving these major new fossil fuel projects in Brooklyn is contrary to that goal. I thank Sane Energy, the No North Brooklyn Pipeline Coalition, my colleagues in government, and Brooklyn residents who have joined the effort to ensure that we reverse course."

"We passed the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act. If we believe in the goals of that act we cannot allow National Grid to get yet another rate hike so they can build more dirty natural gas infrastructure," said Assemblymember Robert Carroll. "We shouldn't have to keep coming out to National Grid's headquarters every six months."

"The Public Service Commission's approved rate hike for downstate National Grid users is taking additional money out of the pockets of hard working New Yorkers while hurting Black and Brown communities," said Assemblymember David Werpin. "National Grid's insistence on funding new fossil fuel projects damages the health of disadvantaged communities and aggravates climate change all while increasing the cost for ratepayers. That this will take place as the City is still recovering from the loss of life and financial devastation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic is unconscionable. I urge the Governor to put a stop to this by investigating the National Grid for violating the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act."

"We are here today to call upon the Governor to protect New Yorkers from climate injustice and the consequences of fossil fuel infrastructure," said Assemblymember JoAnne Simon.

"The folks that are being the most affected by the decisions being made by National Grid are unilaterally poor Black and brown people," said Council Member Antonio Reynoso. "[National Grid] decided to spend billions of dollars on infrastructure for natural gas, and then they want us - the ones that are going to be suffering because of their decision - to pay the bill for future harm to our health ... [Governor Hochul] has done some great things early on. This could be a part of this legacy. It could be a part of the work she did to undo the nonsense that Cuomo was moving forward."

They were joined by community members from the No North Brooklyn Pipeline Coalition who published a list of previously unanswered questions directed at National Grid about its proposed Greenpoint LNG Vaporizers at the head of the pipeline.

The communities near the LNG facility have suffered from a century of pollution to our air, water and soil at the hands of National Grid and their predecessor," said Newtown Creek Alliance Executive Director Willis Elkins. "New York State needs to prioritize a long overdue

cleanup of this facility, not approve an expansion of fossil fuel infrastructure within environmental justice communities.”

National Grid is holding an “Information Session” on Thursday night to answer questions about the proposed fracked gas vaporizers ahead of an anticipated permit decision by the State’s Department of Environmental Conservation sometime in November.

“The community has already shown up to many meetings led by National Grid,” said Katherine Thompson with the No North Brooklyn Pipeline Coalition. “And at every single one National Grid has failed to provide a full scope of the health and climate impacts of its fracked gas projects. Instead of wasting our time and showing up again to have our questions go unanswered, or worse, have National Grid lie to us as they have at other meetings, we are publishing these questions in advance. We don’t expect National Grid to answer them because if they truthfully did, it would reveal its vaporizers violate our law and should be rejected by the DEC.”

If the DEC approves the permit for the new vaporizers, customers will likely see their monthly National Grid gas bills go up even more as surcharges kick in to pay for the project.

“We have had enough of National Grid. It is not the “Greenpoint Energy Center”. It is another chapter in the destruction of our communities and the environment, and it has to go,” said Assemblymember Emily Gallagher. “National Grid’s intentions are focused solely on making money for their shareholders, and their projects are a violation of our climate laws that New York State passed.”

In September, 33 elected officials sent a letter to Governor Kathy Hochul calling on her to review the entire rate hike decision by the PSC—made up of then-Governor Andrew Cuomo’s appointees, saying the order to approve nearly \$129 millions for the North Brooklyn

Pipeline “continues a legacy of environmental racism and climate denial”.

A growing number of elected officials have signed the letter and joined the growing call for Governor Hochul to halt the rate hike and review the PSC order.

So far there has been no response from the Governor's office on the National Grid rate hike but the media is reporting that Governor Hochul has asked two members of the PSC to resign, John Maggiore and John Howard, the latter was chair of the commission at the time of the PSC vote. All seven members of the PSC were appointed by Governor Cuomo.

National Grid also recently announced that on top of the PSC approved rate hike, they are expecting a 31% price spike in the cost of gas this winter.

“The approval of this rate hike, which will force 1.9 million customers to pay for a fracking pipeline and more unwanted fossil fuel projects, is not only widely opposed, but will have disproportionate effects on New York communities that have long been overburdened by environmental injustice,” said Senator Andrew Gounardes. “New York has the chance to be a leader in making the jump to renewable energy. But if we don’t hold companies that use fossil fuels accountable to meet the criteria laid out by the CLCPA and to put people over profit, we’ll be heading in the wrong direction on achieving our climate change goals, reducing emissions, and protecting New Yorkers.”

"When the New York State legislature voted to pass the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act, it asked for a plan that would maintain affordability and reliability of our electric grid. This rate hike by the Public Service Commission does the opposite. And despite thousands of calls, public comments, and outcry to demand that the PSC's decision complies with the CLCPA, it has not been reversed," said Assemblymember Jessica González-Rojas.

"The recent damage that part of my district endured due to the aftermath of Ida is

demonstrative of what happens when our state ignores the harm of fossil fuels. Governor Hochul has seen that reality herself. We saw it together. That is why I, along with my colleagues and advocates, urge the Governor to halt this rate hike so that we can ensure that the landmark legislation that is the CLCPA is implemented as intended."

"We need to stand together wherever in the state the Public Service Commission approves unreasonable and unwarranted gas or electric rate hikes," said Assemblymember Chris Burdick. "We respectfully request that Governor Hochul overturn the PSC approval."

"New York State has led the way on climate protection with the passage of the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act, but the National Grid rate hike will force New Yorkers into subsidizing new fossil fuel projects that are contrary to the environmental protections we fought so hard for in 2019," said Assemblymember Linda B. Rosenthal. "A thorough review of the Public Service Commission's order to approve a rate hike is critical to ensuring environmental protections do not take a backseat to new harmful fossil fuel projects."

###