



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

Griffo & Smullen: Accelerated Renewable Energy Growth and Community Benefit Act silences local voices

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With a 130-megawatt solar facility planned in Deerfield and Newport, New York State Sen. Joseph Griffo, R-I-C-Rome, and state Assemblyman Robert Smullen, R-C-I-SAM-Meco, expressed concerns today with a new state law that allows unelected bureaucrats in Albany to make decisions for local governments.

The Accelerated Renewable Energy Growth and Community Benefit Act was passed as part of the 2020-21 State Budget. It created the Office of Renewable Energy Siting and revamped the approval, siting and construction process for energy-generating facilities in the state.

However, the law also removed two local ad hoc representatives from the New York State Board on Electric Generation Siting and the Environment. As a result, local governments and communities no longer have a say in the siting of certain projects.

The officials in attendance at today's news conference said local control and input is important, especially when it comes to developing energy-specific projects. They pointed to New York Regional Interconnect's attempt to build a 190-mile power line from Marcy to Orange County as an example of why local participation is vital to the siting process. NYRI eventually withdrew its application for the project in 2009 following extensive public outcry from local residents, communities and elected officials.

Sen. Griffo also announced that he is introducing legislation that would eliminate the Office of Renewable Energy Siting and return the process back to Public Service Commission Article 10 regulations that included local governments in the process.

Sen. Griffo said, "While I believe that New York should have a diversified energy portfolio, I did not support the Accelerated Renewable Energy Growth and Community Benefit Act because it silences local voices and takes away local control. Energy projects have become much more prevalent across the state and could have significant and long-term effects on municipalities. Unelected and uninformed bureaucrats in Albany should not be the ones making decisions related to these ventures. My legislation will restore local control and ensure that local governments are once again a part of the decision-making process when it comes to energy projects within their communities."

Assemblyman Smullen said, "While we can all agree that New Yorkers deserve reliable, affordable energy that has the lowest impact on our environmental quality, upstate green space should not be at the mercy of New York City's uncontrollable energy needs. This new permitting process robs our communities of local control when it comes to siting energy projects. Local residents know what is best for their community and I am calling on legislative leaders and energy bureaucrats to return to the Article 10 permitting process to protect local control moving forward."

Deerfield Supervisor Scott Mahardy said, "The Town Board, as well as the residents of the Town of Deerfield, are not opposed to the viable option of renewable energy. But we do stand together in opposition to the process imposed by the State of New York as it relates to the inability of local communities to have a seat and a voice at the 'table' as it relates to the proposed solar project. The inability of the town to have meaningful discussions regarding size, scope, siting, and the application for the proposed Boralex project has generated intense opposition to the proposed project."

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