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It's time to re-evaluate New York's climate goals

August 29, 2024

As Long Islanders are paying more and more for their utilities, it is far past time for more policymakers to ask if the aspirational goals and timelines of the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act are realistic, or if we need to correct course.

To be sure, I want to leave our future generations with a cleaner environment. I also, however, want to leave them a more reliable and more affordable energy grid. I want New York to be a place where our children can grow up and afford to stay, but while the state seeks to create “greener” pastures, the future isn't looking more affordable.

It doesn't need to be this way, though. We can right the ship while still pursuing a cleaner, more reliable and more affordable grid. Rather than focusing on rushed, top-down mandates from the state, we can focus on realistic proposals that prioritize incentivizing this transition by lowering costs for consumers. My colleagues and I in the State Senate Republican conference have done precisely that with the Creating Lasting Affordable Energy for New York legislative package, which would prioritize clean, reliable and affordable energy.

The first proposal would delay implementation of the CLCPA by 10 years, which would allow policymakers to better formulate a plan to transition to clean energy without burdening ratepayers. It would also allow for greater flexibility in adjusting time frames to ensure that the grid is both affordable and, most important, reliable, and able to handle the additional demands of a society powered solely by clean energy. Given the current uncertainties about whether our grid can manage the projected power load demands, this delay is crucial.

Another proposal would prevent power-generation facilities from being closed before a new one comes online. This common-sense practice is necessary for the revamping of our grid to truly be a responsible transition. For instance, the Indian Point nuclear power facility generated roughly a quarter of New York City's energy needs — and of note for residents of Nassau County's South Shore, approximately the same amount of power as the proposed Empire Wind projects — before it was shut down prematurely. Our legislative package would require a feasibility study of bringing Indian Point back online to help meet the city's clean-energy needs.

Given the substantial taxes that the state already collects, this transition shouldn't be shouldered by everyday ratepayers. Instead, our Ratepayer Relief Act would determine the cost of CLCPA mandates and reimburse ratepayers with tax credits, as well as cutting taxes, to save ratepayers more than \$100 million.

My proposal within this package would offer homeowners an additional \$5,000 tax credit to install solar, as well as a new solar School Tax Relief, or STAR, credit for communities that opt to build small to midsized solar projects. Further, my bill would re-establish, and strengthen, local control of the siting of major renewable energy projects, something that seems to be of little importance to Gov. Kathy Hochul.

These proposals, in concert with others we have included, such as lowering costs for hydroelectric plants and bolstering investments in alternative sources of clean energy, like green hydrogen, will help New York make the transition to a cleaner grid without sacrificing reliability or further burdening ratepayers. Albany cannot continue to expect New Yorkers to keep paying more and more, or else they will continue to flee our state's high costs. If we continue that trend rather than implementing these common-sense initiatives, then perhaps New York's ultimate path to eliminating emissions will be to ask the last person who leaves to turn the lights off as they go.

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Published by: LI Herald

Published on: August 29, 2024