

Senator Pam Helming

Representing the 54th New York Senate District



IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

February 27, 2019

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Senator Helming: Fight to Block Incinerator in Seneca County Continues

GENEVA – Senator Pam Helming today announced that the Finger Lakes region’s fight to block a proposed garbage incinerator project from moving forward at the former Seneca Army Depot in the Town of Romulus continues. Her bill to prevent Circular EnerG from obtaining a permit to build an incinerator that would require the daily delivery of more than 2,500 tons of trash to operate has advanced through the Senate Energy and Telecommunications Committee. It will now go before the Senate for a vote.

“The fight to stop this misguided proposal that would devastate the surrounding communities continues. This is a moment of celebration for the entire Finger Lakes region and all those who believe in clean water, clean air, and a high quality of life for our children and families. Ever since this project first came before the Romulus Planning Board, I have worked with local residents, environmental advocates, and business owners to craft this legislation and gain support for it. We brought together many diverse groups, including statewide business organizations and environmental advocacy groups, who are typically on opposite sides of the table to make sure that this project never happens and never has a chance of happening. The Finger Lakes Community Preservation Act, as the legislation is known, supports residents and business owners who are fearful of the impact this project would have on public health, the environment, their businesses, and the value of their property. Most importantly, it protects the children of Romulus who would have been forced to go to school next to a smokestack releasing who knows what. Whether you are a Republican or a Democrat, this is not a political issue. We need to continue putting the people first, not politics. Thank you to Senator May for her partnership on this important legislation and to my colleagues on the Energy and Telecommunications Committee for working to advance this legislation,” Senator Helming said.

This legislation (S.2270/A.5029) prohibits the New York State Public Service Commission (PSC) and others from issuing a waste-to-energy permit for a proposed trash incinerator if it meets the following conditions:

- The facility is within the Oswego River/Finger Lakes watershed;
- There is at least one landfill or other solid waste management facility permitted by the Department of Environmental Conservation and operating or located within a 50-mile radius of the proposed incineration facility;

- The proposed facility is within 10 miles of a priority waterbody as designated by the Department of Environmental Conservation.

Opponents of the project note that the incinerator would produce toxic ash from burning a range of solid wastes that can vary widely in chemical output, making compliance with emissions and toxic waste limits difficult. Siting a trash incinerator in the Finger Lakes region, with the associated impacts of air and ash pollution, will damage local tourism as well as the booming wine and agricultural industries. The Assembly bill is sponsored by Assemblyman Michael Cusick and has been referred to the Assembly Energy Committee.

Finger Lakes Wine Business Coalition Secretary William Ouweleen, also Vintner of O-Neh-Da and Eagle Crest Vineyards, said, “The Finger Lakes wine and agritourism industry is grateful that Senators Helming and May, along with Assembly Members Cusick and Palmesano, have come to the aid and rescue of the people of the Finger Lakes, through the introduction of a bipartisan bill that will prohibit garbage incineration projects in the Finger Lakes watershed. This legislation will serve to protect the economic interests of the Finger Lakes and preserve the Finger Lakes brand, which is becoming world-renowned for fine wine, food, and ecotourism.”

New York Wine Industry Association member Carol Doolittle, also co-owner of Frontenac Point Vineyard, said, “All winery owners and employees in the Finger Lakes region thank Senator Helming for successfully working to protect our environment and the tourism livelihood of thousands of small businesses. We are happy that she is collaborating with other legislators to achieve this goal and always look forward to working with her. The focus should be on reducing waste, not sending it to rural New York, where it will negatively impact residents as well as people who travel here to enjoy the beauty of the land. Landfills and incinerators are not beautiful. If they were, the waste would be disposed of where it is generated.”

Seneca Lake Guardian President Joseph Campbell said, “We remain indebted to Senator Helming for her dedication to getting this vital bill passed, and we are grateful to Senator Rachel May for her sponsorship of the bill. The proposed garbage-burning facility in the heart of the Finger Lakes has bipartisan, widespread opposition, and this bill should have been passed during last year’s legislative session. We urge Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie and Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins to do everything in their power to ensure swift passage of this bill and for Governor Cuomo to sign it into law as soon as it reaches his desk. The families and businesses of the Finger Lakes have fought long enough and deserve to have this issue settled once and for all.”

Senator Helming represents the 54th Senate District, which consists of Seneca and Wayne Counties, parts of Cayuga and Ontario Counties, and the towns of Lansing and Webster. For more information, please visit Senator Helming’s [website](#), or follow @SenatorHelming on Facebook or Twitter.

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