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Another Voice: Renewable energy will benefit everyone

By Another Voice

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By Robert M. Ciesielski

In August, the New York State Public Service Commission established the Clean Energy Standard, a procedure to enable 50 percent of the state's electricity to be provided from renewable energy sources by 2030. The mechanism implements the 2015 New York State Energy Plan based on a four-year study of our state's energy system.

New York's goal is similar to the 50 percent renewable energy by 2030 law adopted by the California legislature last year and signed by Gov. Jerry Brown. The Massachusetts legislature also passed an energy bill in 2016 ensuring that by 2030, 40 percent of the state's electricity will be provided from renewable sources, while including a major commitment to offshore wind power.

New York, California and Massachusetts comprise 20 percent of our nation's population. If these states were considered a country, they would comprise the fourth-largest economy of the world. These states are a beacon to the United States, showing the promise of a sustainable, clean, renewable energy economy. Development of

renewable energy not only counters climate change and the adverse health effects of polluted water, air and land, but offers substantial economic benefits to all.

The future economy is already available to us. In December, the Long Island Power Authority (LIPA) announced the approval of a 90 megawatt wind farm off eastern Long Island. The project is supported by 85 percent of Long Island's residents, including a bipartisan political coalition of workers, unions, environmentalists and business leaders. The wind project will supply electricity to some 50,000 homes. Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo has set a goal of 2,400 megawatts of offshore wind power by 2030, enough to power well over 1 million residences and provide for a healthy downstate economy.

Europe currently supplies much of its energy from wind and solar sources. Europeans supply over 10 gigawatts, or 10,000 megawatts, of electricity from offshore wind alone. The strength of the European economy is based in large part on the conscious decision of many of its countries to proceed with renewable energy development, stimulating investments in manufacturing and the installation of renewable energy sources.

Looking at the Earth, I am concerned about the detrimental effects of our current fossil fuel and nuclear based economy. The Paris Climate Agreement, signed by 194 countries, is a worldwide measure to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to prevent the global climate from increasing beyond 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) with the aspirational goal of a no greater than 1.5 degrees Celsius increase.

We have at this time the ability to help create a sustainable energy system capable of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improving the life of humankind and all creatures. Let us use the means we have been given to help protect the Earth and our children.

Robert M. Ciesielski, of Buffalo, is chairman of the Energy Committee of the Atlantic Chapter of the Sierra Club.