

# THE BUFFALO NEWS

ANOTHER VOICE

## *Energy growth act needed for New York State to meet its goals*

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**By Another Voice**

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The large majority of Americans agree that human-caused global climate change is occurring now and must be reversed. Leaving an inhabitable planet to future generations is up to us.

To this end, development of renewable energy produced by solar, wind and small hydro is essential to reduce carbon and methane emissions.

Last year, the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act was overwhelmingly passed by the New York State Legislature. It sets goals of 70% of our state's electricity to be produced from renewable energy sources by 2030 and to completely decarbonize our electric grid by 2040.

Building a renewable energy infrastructure is urgent and necessary to achieve these goals. The purpose of this year's proposed Accelerated Renewable Energy Growth & Community Benefit Act is to set procedures for us to meet our energy goals. The current state mechanism for approving the construction of energy projects is cumbersome and makes it impossible to reach our targets.

In the last eight years only five projects have been approved and only one is under construction.

The new law would streamline the procedures for authorizing clean renewable energy projects. Under this proposed law, environmental protections would be maintained, including the need to meet all federal and state regulations concerning birds and wildlife.

The bill also contains requirements for public comments and judicial review. Since 2015, New York's energy policy has also been to localize much of our electricity production in order to lower and stabilize costs to consumers, increase reliability of delivery of energy in emergencies, and to develop clean energy. The proposed act will also aid in securing all these important energy sector aims.

A tipping point has been reached where electricity produced from solar and wind power is less expensive than traditionally sourced power in many parts of the United States. Already many Western New York consumers may purchase locally produced Community Solar generated electricity for less than they now pay for traditional power.

The proposed law would further permit discounts and credits directly on utility bills to residents in communities where renewable energy facilities have been constructed.

Job opportunities from the transition to renewable energy are significant. New York law already sets prevailing family wages for the construction and operation of renewable projects. Union workers in many parts of New York are fully supportive of these new wind and solar power developments.

Economic well-being is also increased in communities where farmers earn income from leases for renewable energy development. This income supplement enables many farmers to keep their land in agriculture. Solar and wind projects also bring millions of dollars in taxes to towns and school districts and keep our energy dollars local.

Please contact your state legislators in order to support the Accelerated Renewable Energy Growth & Community Benefits Act.

*Robert M. Ciesielski is energy committee chairman for the Sierra Club's Atlantic Chapter.*

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