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# Another Voice: Bill promotes use of low-carbon concrete products

Connie Cincotta and Jigar Shah  
Nov 29, 2020

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**C**oncrete is the backbone of New York's iconic buildings, soaring bridges and landmark monuments. It's the most common building material in the world: 30 billion tons produced every year – 81 times the weight of every person on Earth.

Yet making concrete accounts for a whopping 7% of heat-trapping carbon dioxide emissions – the vast majority from the production of concrete’s key ingredient, Portland cement. At 4.4 billion tons of CO<sub>2</sub> a year, Portland cement production emits twice as much pollution as all the cars and trucks in the U.S.

New York lawmakers are considering a bill that would slash these emissions. The Low Embodied Carbon Concrete Leadership Act, or LECCLA, encourages concrete producers to embrace emissions reductions – not by imposing a rigid, top-down mandate, but by offering a leg-up as companies compete for state contracts.

The bill, sponsored by Assemblyman Robert Carroll and Sen. Todd Kaminsky, is part of New York’s wide-ranging effort to stave off the worst effects of our climate crisis. If approved, it would take a significant

step toward achieving Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo's ambitious goal of zeroing out the state's greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

But this bill isn't merely good for the planet – it's good for concrete and construction.

State construction projects, in soliciting public bids, would partly prioritize proposals that incorporate low-carbon concrete. The proposals with the lowest measurable climate impact would earn a competitive price advantage, improving their shot at winning each contract.

The bill, in other words, rather than dictating some minimum required level of low-carbon concrete, instead simply encourages and empowers project managers to incorporate the amount that's best for the job.

Best of all, it creates demand: New York State is the concrete industry's biggest customer. By harnessing state projects, LECCLA would create a reliable market for low-carbon concrete – helping bring down costs for the material while actively benefiting businesses and taxpayers.

There are ample materials and processes available – locally and at low cost. Even better, thanks to recent innovation, newer types of concrete not only generate fewer emissions by reducing their cement content, but in fact remove pollution from the air by replacing that cement with carbon.

Think about that: The more concrete we produce, the more carbon emissions we can store. If you're in an industry that depends on a robust construction economy, talk about a great incentive.

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Concrete has been used in construction for more than eight millennia. Today it remains the pillar of construction around the world. LECCLA can help make sure concrete, and a livable planet, will be here for the centuries to come.

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