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MAILBAG: Ortt wrong to oppose renewable energy projects

Jan 26, 2021



State Senate Minority Leader Robb Ortt responded to Governor Cuomo's State of the State address stating that it looked like the governor took some of the Republican-led "Reset New York" agenda to heart. He says his party plans to be a voice for local economies, taxpayers and job creators. So, what's the deal with his adamant opposition to multiple propositions to add to the local tax base in his district covering Niagara and Orleans counties?

Day three of Governor Cuomo's address was devoted to renewable energy including the "largest green energy initiative by any state in U.S. history" with much of the economic impact to be made in upstate New York. What was the Senator's response? He voiced his displeasure about the governor's announcement of a 200-megawatt Orleans Solar farm planned in the towns of Barre and Shelby.

Ortt's knee-jerk reaction to a renewable project was predictable. He previously sponsored a forum on the health effects of wind turbines. According to the WBEN news report of the forum, the program was one sided, with half of the speakers being elected officials, and all vocally opposed to this type of power generation. Earlier, he sponsored a bill to ban wind turbines within 40 miles of a military operation despite multiple examples (like Fort Drum outside of Watertown) of renewable energy projects near bases that operate without interfering with military operations.

With that background, his assertion that the Orleans Solar project completely disregards the wishes of the local residents should also be questioned. The Heritage Wind project is moving forward with backing from the residents of the town of Barre. When these projects become operational, the PILOT payments to the town and the county will be new revenue that will benefit its residents with lower taxes and increased services.

JOHN SZALASNY, Amherst, Sierra Club Niagara Group

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