

Environmental Advocates of New York * New York City Environmental Justice Alliance * New York Lawyers for the Public Interest * New York Public Interest Research Group * UPROSE

NEWS RELEASE

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GROUPS PRAISE ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE PROTECTIONS IN POWER PLANT SITING LEGISLATION

Environmental justice groups and environmental advocates praised the “Power NY Act” for protecting low-income communities and communities of color from being disproportionately burdened by the impacts of new power generating facilities.

Among the highlights of the new legislation are:

- Increased funding for local communities to hire legal and technical consultants that will enable them to participate effectively in power plant siting decisions;
- Requiring proposed power plants to avoid or minimize any cumulative impacts on air quality in the vicinity of the proposed power plant; and,
- Requiring proposed power plants that would result in or contribute to disproportionate impacts in an affected community to avoid, offset or mitigate these impacts within that community.

“The NYC Environmental Justice Alliance applauds the Assembly, Governor and Senate on an energy package with unprecedented resonance for environmental justice communities statewide,” said Eddie Bautista, executive director of the NYC Environmental Justice Alliance. “The Article X bill will afford the strongest protections for environmentally overburdened communities of color by mandating - for the first time - cumulative impact analyses that measure a community's total environmental load before siting a power plant. More importantly, if a community is found to be disproportionately burdened, power plant applicants will have to commit to local, verifiable offsets of any projected pollution emissions before the power plant can be sited, thereby easing the burden on our most vulnerable communities.”

“This bill ensures a fair power plant siting process that protects low-income communities and communities of color from being further overburdened with negative impacts from electricity generation,” said Gavin Kearney, Director of Environmental Justice for the New York Lawyers

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for the Public Interest. “Its environmental justice provisions are both unprecedented, and long overdue, for New York.”

“Because Article X fast tracks power plant proposals and sets up an alternate environmental review process, it is critical that the process ensures effective and informed local participation and ensures the fair treatment of all communities,” said Laura Haight, senior environmental associate with NYPIRG. “This legislation is a huge step forward from the old siting law that expired in 2003, and represents a significant environmental justice milestone.”

“For far too long, the poorest New Yorkers have borne the burden of being home to dirty power plants,” said Ross Gould, Air & Energy Program Director, Environmental Advocates of New York. “The energy agreement reached today will increase investments in energy efficiency while updating New York's power plant siting law to make the disproportionate number of polluting power plants in low-income communities part of our history instead of current events. Environmental Advocates of New York applauds the Assembly, Senate and Governor Cuomo for responsibly improving the state's power plant siting for everyone's benefit.”

“Communities like Sunset Park, Brooklyn have fought against the disproportionate and discriminatory siting of power plants in close proximity to our senior centers, schools, child care facilities and homes for years,” said Elizabeth Yeampierre, executive director of UPROSE. “UPROSE applauds the Governor and legislature for demonstrating a commitment to environmental justice by passing legislation that will protect New York's most environmentally vulnerable communities.”

In addition to the Article X reauthorization, the Power NY Act (A.8510-Cahill/S.5844-Maziarz) includes provisions to better implement the Green Jobs-Green New York law that was passed in 2009. “The on-bill recovery portion of the bill represents another milestone,” added Eddie Bautista of NYC Environmental Justice Alliance. “Since launching NYC's first green jobs program for people of color in 1996, the Alliance has been committed to the expansion of green jobs as the most economically and environmentally sustainable strategy to reinvest in our workers and communities.”

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