NYPIRG’s Earth Day Countdown of Ten Steps New York Must Take to be an Environmental Leader

**Step 7: Increase Energy Efficiency Standards for Earth Day**

(NY) – From now until Earth Day, NYPIRG is counting down ten steps that New York must take to be a national environmental leader. With climate deniers firmly in control of national policies, it will be up to the states to act.

In recent years, New York has unveiled ambitious environmental programs and actions. But, announcements must be backed up by achievements.

**Step 7 is for Governor Cuomo to Make New York the nation’s leader in energy efficiency in his Earth Day announcement.**

Today, NYPIRG released a letter on energy efficiency signed by more than 100 organizations urging the Governor to match, if not surpass California and Massachusetts. NY’s ranking on energy efficiency has slipped from 2011 through 2017, falling from 3rd in the nation to 7th. Massachusetts is a national leader. California recently passed legislation to double their efficiency standards, with a goal of 4% energy savings.

In his 2018 State of the State, the Governor announced a plan to create new energy efficiency targets, acknowledging that “much work remains to realize the full potential of energy efficiency for New Yorkers.” He directed New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) and the Public Service Commission (PSC) to propose new 2025 energy efficiency targets by Earth Day, April 22, 2018.

The American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy estimates that New York achieved only 1.05 percent annual incremental savings in 2015, as compared to annual incremental savings of 2.91 percent in Rhode Island, 2.74 percent in Massachusetts, 2.01 percent in Vermont, and 1.95 percent in California.

Studies have found energy efficiency to be the most cost-effective way to curb global warming. NYSERDA’s energy efficiency programs return $3 for every $1 invested (not including health benefits or reductions in climate change). Amory Lovins, co-founder of the Rocky Mountain Institute, says energy efficiency is “the largest, cheapest, safest, cleanest, fastest way to provide energy services.”

Ahead of his Earth Day efficiency announcement, the over 100 community, environmental, and religious groups called on Governor Cuomo to commit New York to be the nation’s leader on energy efficiency.

“When it comes to energy efficiency programs, New York must be a national leader, not slipping behind. It’s time for the state to step up.” – **Blair Horner, NYPIRG Executive Director**
“For Governor Cuomo to be a true climate leader, he must establish ambitious goals to reduce the amount of energy that New York wastes. Cuomo must lead New York to 100 percent renewable power by 2030, and increasing energy efficiency is an important means of getting us there.” – Eric Weltman, Brooklyn-based senior organizer with Food & Water Watch

“Aggressive energy efficiency policies are not only key to mitigating climate change and achieving the goals of the Paris Climate Accord, but also critical in offsetting projected increases in residential energy demand that will result from climate change and extreme temperature shifts.” – Lyna Hinkel, 350NYC

"New York needs strong energy efficiency standards to reflect and achieve a goal of transitioning rapidly to 100% renewable energy. We must become a leader in this area, and set a positive example for other states as well. Energy savings goals for individual utilities should be mandated, and utilities should be required to embrace the principles of the state's REV program, especially with respect to distributed energy. Building codes should be updated to require zero emissions for new buildings and retrofits for existing buildings. It is also critical that new energy standards do not encourage reliance on natural gas (methane), or conversion to gas boilers; and that new initiatives do not create rate increases for low and middle income communities." – Edie Kantrowitz, United for Action

“Community Advocates for Sustainable Energy (CASE) is working hard to promote renewable alternatives to fossil fuels, but the first thing we should all be doing is reduce our energy needs and make sure that we use energy as efficiently as possible. NY State should be doing all it can by giving incentives to help in this regard. These measures are necessary to slow our climate warming and save our planet.” – Becky Meier, Community Advocates for Sustainable Energy

"Ramping up energy efficiency measures can redirect billions of dollars—currently spent by New Yorkers on out of state, dirty fossil fuels—into the creation of home-grown energy efficiency jobs in communities across the state. A focus on clean, renewable energy and efficiency measures will protect our families from breathing in dangerous combustion emissions, move us away from the dated, fossil fuel economy that is causing climate change, and can add to the bottom line of every business and household. That’s a win-win for all of us—and we need our leaders to make that happen.” – Bob DiBenedetto, President/Executive Director, HealthyPlanet

“Climate Crisis is a dire emergency now. There is practically no time to save all life and civilization on Earth. We must act now for 100% clean, renewable energy. No sort of delay is sensible. Going without electricity or conserving greatly while transitioning is necessary now. Fossil fuels must be kept in the ground unused and renewable energy developed with lightning speed.” – Daniela Gioseffi, Editor/Director, Earthly Blessings

Attached: Letter to Governor Cuomo

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BY HAND

April 18, 2018

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York State
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo:

We are pleased that you will be making an Earth Day announcement as to what steps New York will take on energy efficiency by 2025.

We urge you to commit New York to be the nation’s leader on energy efficiency. Over the last seven years New York’s ranking has slipped from number 3 to number 7. Neighboring Massachusetts is now the national leader in energy efficiency, though California recently passed legislation to double their efficiency standards, with a goal of 4% energy savings New York should match if not surpass California and Massachusetts.

The most critical action is to mandate energy efficiency savings for individual utilities, which would ramp up over time. It is important that New York adopt clear, short-time timelines (e.g., annual) and benchmarks to guide our progress in meeting such goals.

Utilities need to play a leading role in buying energy saving programs and products. They must be required to embrace the goals of the state’s Reform Energy Vision (REV) program, including supporting the development of renewable distributed energy resources (DER) (i.e., not natural gas).

The state should set aside 40% of energy efficiency investments for climate vulnerable and frontline communities, partnering with those communities in executing energy efficiency initiatives. Additionally, it is critical these targets prioritize equity by incorporating inclusive financing mandates for utilities, prevent rate increases for low- and moderate-income ratepayers, provide good-paying jobs, integrate public accountability measures, address the needs of multi-family housing, incentivize comprehensive in-unit improvements, and preserve housing affordability.

Methane is 80 times more potent short term as a greenhouse gas than carbon. Thus it is critical that our energy efficiency goals do not support the use of natural gas. The Governor’s energy efficiency plan must seriously address heating but should do so by rejecting natural gas in favor of clean renewable energy such as geothermal and heat pumps. While the plan should set aggressive targets for fossil fuel use reductions, efficiency savings must not be achieved (or counted towards goals) by creating incentives for or promoting the conversion of heating oil furnaces to gas fired, or replacing less efficient gas furnaces to more efficient gas furnaces.

The Efficiency Initiative should grow additional opportunities for energy efficiency businesses in New York that currently employ 110,000 New Yorkers. Embracing the creation of sustainable financing mechanisms, the state should monetize the benefits of efficiency; compensate providers for those benefits; and, create a competitive procurement to get the most value for customers.

It should support Pay for Performance, an energy efficiency procurement approach which allows energy efficiency companies to compete for contracts that specify how much energy is expected to be saved, and then pays the price offered by the bidders for energy savings as they occur.

State energy building codes should be updated to require new buildings to have net zero carbon emissions. A mandatory program should be initiated requiring existing buildings to do cost-effective energy building retrofits.
Incentives to heat buildings with clean, renewable energy (geothermal, air heat pumps) should be increased and expanded. Existing energy retrofit programs (e.g., Green Jobs Green NY) should be reformed to achieve their stated goals.

The efficiency standards should reflect the goal of moving to 100% clean energy as soon as possible (i.e., much faster than the state’s present goals). It needs to recognize that moving to 100% clean energy will involve electrifying energy uses that cannot otherwise be eliminated (e.g., electric cars and heating), which will likely increase overall electricity production especially in the near term (e.g., beneficial electrification). It should provide maximum credit for additional efficiency gained via beneficial electrification through heat pumps and electric vehicles.

We urge you to take bold action to make New York the national leader on energy efficiency.

Signed,

350NYC New York City
Advocates for Springfield Springfield Center
Alliance of New York Family Councils New York
Aytzim: Ecological Judaism New York
Bethlehem NY Indivisible Delmar
Big Reuse Brooklyn
Bronx Climate Justice North Bronx
Brooklyn For Peace Brooklyn
Campaign for Renewable Energy Ithaca
Carbon Tax Center New York
Carbon Xprint LLC New York
Catskill Mountainkeeper Livingston Manor
Central Park West CSA New York
Church Women United in New York State Rochester
Citizens Committee for New York City New York
Citizens' Environmental Coalition Cuddebackville
Citizens For Water New York City
Coalition Against Nukes Wainscott
Coalition to Protect New York Elmira
Community Advocates for Sustainable Energy CASE Canaan
CUNY Divest New York City
Damascus Citizens for Sustainability  Narrowsburg
Daughters of Wisdom US Province  Ozone Park
Delmar Farmers' Market  Delmar
Democracy for New York City  Brooklyn
Dēmos  New York City
Dominican Sisters of Blauvelt  New Rochelle
Dryden Resource Awareness Coalition  Dryden
Earth Eden Sanctuary  North Rose
Eco-Logic, WBAI-FM  New York City
EldersClimateAction  Cohoes
Empire State Consumer Project, Inc.  Rochester
Empire State Indivisible  New York City
Environmental Justice Task Force of the WNY Peace Center  Buffalo
First Reformed Church of Schenectady  Schenectady
Food & Water Watch  Brooklyn
Fossil Free Tompkins  Brooktondale
Franciscan Sisters of the Atonement  Garrison
Full Potential Consulting  Lansing
Gas Free Seneca  Watkins Glen
Greater New York Labor Religion Coalition  New York
Green Education and Legal Fund  Poestenkill
Greene Rural Action Bloc  Athens
Greyrock Farm CSA LLC  Cazenovia
Hazon  New York
HealthyPlanet  Huntington
Hunger Action Network of NYS  Albany
Indian Point Safe Energy Coalition  Cortlandt Manor
Interfaith Peace Network  Buffalo
Long Beach Environmental Advisory Board  Long Beach
Mamaki New Rochelle
Manhattan Central Medical Society, local affiliate of the National Medical Association New York
Metro NY Catholic Climate Movement New York City
National Jobs for All Coalition Lynbrook
New Economy Project New York
New York Heartwoods Kingston
New York Lawyers for the Public Interest New York
New York Progressive Action Network Enviro Committee Athens
North American Climate, Conservation and Environment (NACCE) Roosevelt
Nuclear Age Peace Foundation New York
NW Bronx Indivisible Bronx
NY Buddhist Climate Action Network New York
NY Statewide Senior Action Council Albany
NYC Friends of Clearwater NYC
NYC Grassroots Alliance New York
NYC H2O New York City
NYC Safe Energy Campaign New York City
NYH20 New York City
NYPIRG New York
Pathway to Paris New York
People for a Healthy Environment Corning
People of Albany United for Safe Energy Albany
People's Climate Movement Albany
Plymouth Friends for Clean Water South Plymouth
Rochester Pachamama Alliance Rochester
Rochester People's Climate Coalition Rochester
Save the Pine Bush Albany
Sealed New York
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