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NYPIRG STATEMENT ON ENVIRONMENTAL BUDGET

(Albany, N.Y.) The State Legislature today approved funding for a range of environmental programs and policies, including funding for some of the most pressing environmental challenges facing New York State. Unfortunately, the budget failed to address several important initiatives.

◆ **Eliminating Fossil Fuels through Electrification:** As the world reels from the United Nations IPCC international report stating it is “now or never” for a livable future, including immediate building electrification, the gridlock in Washington forces states to take the lead. “We are in an emergency situation with only 8 years to halve our carbon emissions. **We call on the Governor, Senate, and Assembly to pass the All New Electric Building Act on April 25th in honor of Earth Day.** Heat pumps work well in very cold climates, including the Arctic, and the State’s electric energy supply is adequate through 2031 – there is absolutely no reason to wait,” said NYPIRG Environmental Policy Director Anne Rabe.

◆ **Cleaning Up Toxic Waste Sites:** “The **Brownfield Cleanup Programs were renewed** for 10 more years, without improving soil cleanup standards and in the absence of a full assessment of the possibly too generous grants and tax abatements to developers. The Legislature should hold hearings and fix the state’s Brownfield Cleanup Programs,” said Rabe.

◆ **Clean Water Funding:** “The Governor and Legislature failed to double the amount of funds for the **Clean Water Infrastructure Act** to help more communities upgrade water infrastructure, leaving it at \$500 million,” said Rabe.

◆ **Rejected Industry Packaging Reduction Bill:** “We applaud the Assembly and Senate for rejecting Governor Hochul’s flawed **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) packaging proposal** based on industry self-regulation. Producers have a financial conflict of interest and should have no role in deciding when and how to detoxify and reduce packaging, especially plastics,” said NYPIRG Environmental Campaign Coordinator Ryan Thorsen Carson.

◆ **Bottle Bill Expansion Left on the Shelf:** “The Legislature missed a golden opportunity act on the state’s worsening waste crisis through an expansion of the state’s **Bottle Bill**. The forty-year old law is a historic success, but needs to be updated for another four decades of achievement. Increasing the deposit from a nickel to a dime, while expanding the bill to cover wine, liquor, and more plastic containers would relieve municipalities like Onondaga County, which are being buried in trash and further costs to haul it. We urge the state to make revising the law an elevated priority post-budget,” Carson said.

◆ **Over 160 organizations eagerly await Assembly Environmental Chair Steve Englebright’s EPR and Bottle Deposit Expansion bills, based on environmental and economic justice principles.** The two bills will work in tandem to detoxify and reduce packaging waste, substantially increase recycling, provide a long-overdue raise to recycling “canners,” and take the burden off of municipalities by setting ambitious reduction and reuse standards.

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The budget included substantial funding and improvements for a range of environmental programs, including the following.

\$4.2 billion for the **Clean Water & Clean Air Environmental Bond Act**, would help the State combat climate change, protect drinking water and respond to solid waste pollution—including funding for climate-friendly, electric school buses. **The funding is contingent on voter approval in November 2022.**

\$400 million for the **Environmental Protection Fund** enables it to support projects critical for protecting water, combating climate change, and keeping public spaces clean.

Revamping the state’s **Freshwater Wetlands Regulatory Program** to protect up to 1 million additional acre, for wetlands 7.4 acres or more, and smaller areas of “unusual importance.”