

NYPIRG, Citizen Action of New York, S.H.A.R.E, Earthjustice, New Yorkers for Clean Power, Sane Energy Project, Concerned Health Professional of New York, Food & Water Watch, Alliance for a Green Economy

NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release: Wednesday, March 4, 2026

Contact: Blair Horner 518-7274506, bhorner@nypirg.org

CLIMATE AND COMMUNITY GROUPS JOIN WITH LAWMAKERS TO “SAY NO” TO THE HOCHUL ADMINISTRATION’S EFFORT TO GUT CLIMATE LAW IN BUDGET NEGOTIATIONS

INSTEAD FOCUS ON ADDRESSING THE TRUE DRIVER OF INCREASED ENERGY COSTS - FOSSIL FUELS

(Albany) – A coalition of climate and community leaders joined with elected officials to criticize the Hochul Administration’s apparent effort to jam into budget negotiations a plan to undermine the state’s landmark seven-year-old climate law, the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act.

[Photos and videos from the press conference can be found here.](#)

Last week, the administration unveiled a three-page document asserting that the Climate Law would increase New Yorkers’ energy bills. The governor did *not* include any measure to modify the CLCPA in her publicly-released budget plan.

The Climate Law was signed seven years ago. The groups want to know why now is the time the Hochul Administration is advancing this plan. Both the Hochul Administration and its predecessor have been criticized for a lackluster effort to implement the Climate Law. In August, a state supreme court judge ruled that the Hochul administration violated the Climate Law by not releasing regulations to implement the greenhouse gas reduction mandates in the law.

The groups argued that the consequences are too great for the Hochul Administration’s proposal to be jammed into last minute budget negotiations. Instead, if the governor truly wants to address the energy affordability crisis New Yorkers are facing right now, she would address the buildout of gas infrastructure in our state. The Governor’s focus on rolling back the Climate Law is a red herring that will do nothing to help lower energy bills now.

“I’m enraged, but not surprised, to learn that the Governor is trying to include CLCPA rollbacks in the FY27 budget. It is totally disingenuous to present energy transition as at odds with affordability. Gas prices are rising and will continue to do so because of the need to replace antiquated, leak-prone infrastructure, as well as geopolitical instability caused by warmongers and wanna-be oil tycoons. We can take control of our energy destiny, deliver tens of thousands of union jobs, and lower utility bills by fully implementing laws like the Build Public Renewables

Act, the All Electric Buildings Act, and NY HEAT. The future of our state depends on it,” **said Assemblymember Emily Gallagher.**

“It is sad to see the Governor misleading the public on an issue so critical as energy prices. The main reasons for rising energy prices have nothing to do with environmental regulation. Energy prices are rising due to increasing costs of fossil fuels, especially natural gas, which our State imports, and the fact the State continues to finance rehabilitation and upgrading of the power grid on the backs of ratepayers. The power grid is 100 years old and needs modernization even in the absence of green energy. The State needs to invest directly in the power grid so that the ratepayers (us) do not absorb these costs. Once that is done, ultimately the cost of green energy will be far less than fossil fuels. We don’t have to pay to import wind and sun like we do with natural gas. Nuclear is also a budget buster. We already subsidize our three nuclear power plants in the billions of dollars. This money is better spent financing the alternatives,” **said Assemblymember Phil Steck.**

“In my district and across our state, households are struggling with higher energy costs driven by our state’s reliance on costly fossil fuels,” **said Assemblymember Phara Souffrant Forrest.** “Our best bet to tackle the energy affordability crisis is by protecting and implementing our state’s Climate Law, not weakening it. That’s why I’m proud to stand with advocates as we fight for a more affordable clean energy future that will provide economic relief to families, lead to healthier air, and create a more sustainable, climate-friendly New York.”

“I remain committed to defending and fully implementing the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act because our future depends on it,” said Senator Lea Webb. “This landmark law protects public health and ensures frontline communities are not left behind. We cannot afford to delay action on the climate crisis, and I will continue fighting to keep New York a national leader in building a cleaner, more just future.” **said State Senator Lea Webb.**

“Rolling back New York’s signature climate law would move the state in the wrong direction. We should be accelerating investments in affordable energy that create jobs and build a healthier future. The CLCPA set ambitious goals prioritizing environmental justice to protect communities that have borne the lion’s share of environmental harm, while requiring those goals be achieved in the most cost-effective way. The NYSERDA memo misleads by conflating the CLCPA with cap-and-invest—a program that does not yet exist—and by speculating on the most expensive way to do it. We should be driven by reality and not Big Oil’s talking points. The reality is that utility costs are driven by maintaining costly, old fossil fuel infrastructure, not by the CLCPA,” **said Assemblymember Jo Anne Simon.**

Assemblymember Sarahana Shrestha said, “At a time when the economic and social costs of the climate crisis is threatening to upend our stability as we know it, it was completely reckless and disingenuous for the Governor’s office to put out blatantly false and misleading information on what the state’s climate goals would cost ratepayers. The NYSERDA memo estimates the cost of the most expensive way of implementing cap and invest, and there are two major problems with that: cap and invest is not the only way of implementing the state’s goals, and second, cap and invest can be implemented in a myriad of ways, and the one that would cost the ratepayers

the most is obviously not the way to do it. California has done it in a way that has already saved ratepayers \$30 billion.”

“The Governor should get a large share of the blame for New York’s difficulties in meeting the climate law targets by slow-walking implementation of the CLCPA and other climate laws. Instead of trying to weaken the Climate Law, she should immediately comply with the court order in our lawsuit and release regulations to severely reduce the use of gas and other sources of greenhouse gas emissions,” said **Bob Cohen, Policy and Research Director of Citizen Action of New York**. As a result of a lawsuit brought by Citizen Action and three other climate groups (*Citizen Action of New York vs. DEC*), DEC was ordered to release regulations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions enough to comply with the CLCPA.

“Reducing climate emissions has been the law since 2019, yet in violation of the law, Governor Hochul hasn’t released a plan. She works in the Capitol that is heated by burning gas in an environmental justice community where residents have been calling for a renewable Capitol since 2017, yet there still is no decarbonization plan. Instead of whining that it’s too hard to meet our climate mandates, Hochul should get to work and implement the law. Our climate is in crisis. We can’t wait any longer,” said **Merton Simpson, Albany County Legislator and Co-chair, Sheridan Hollow Alliance for Renewable Energy**.

“Instead of proposing to galvanize the state’s so-far-lethargic effort to meet the science-based goals of the Climate Law, apparently the governor wants to back off and give up,” said **Blair Horner, senior policy advisor at NYPIRG**. “How can we blame a law we’re not implementing for the rising cost of gas? The Legislature should firmly reject the governor’s move. The governor’s apparent plan is too consequential to get jammed into secret budget negotiations.”

“What affects the climate affects the health of New Yorkers every day. So-called natural gas is mostly methane, a powerful greenhouse gas, responsible for 40 percent of global heating over the past two decades. Transporting and using methane harms New Yorkers as it leaks from the pipelines it travels through and when it is combusted in gas appliances, especially gas stoves in the kitchen. Pipeline leaks, large and small, exacerbate health-damaging particulate pollution, or PM2.5, which travels deep into the lungs and increases the risk of heart disease and asthma. Methane burned indoors brings with it carcinogenic benzene, for which there is no known safe level of exposure. A large body of evidence documents the harmful impacts of the methane gas energy system, and we applaud New York’s past actions to prevent exposures and improve public health. We now renew our call on Governor Hochul to reject new pipelines and to accelerate, not pause, building electrification,” said **Carmi Orenstein, MPH, Concerned Health Professionals of New York**

“You can’t claim climate policy is too expensive if you never calculated the cost of staying dependent on fossil fuels. Gas is driving up every bill, and NYISO and countless analyses confirm it,” said **Kim Fraczek, Director of Sane Energy Project**. “New Yorkers deserve the full math, not selective hypotheticals. The administration could immediately reduce costs and pollution by expanding public power through NYPA. Anything less is an insult to families, letting gas utilities and their allies profit at the expense of everyday New Yorkers, a clear repeat of the same racket that greenlit the Williams NESE pipeline.”

“Governor Hochul regularly speaks of fighting for families, but by trying to weaken the CLCPA, she is fighting to maximize the profits of fossil fuel corporations and her Big Tech donors. If she cares about our families, she should invest in renewable energy, not echo Trump in rolling back climate policies meant to protect our children and grandchildren,” **said Laurel Tumarkin, Policy Director at Climate Families NY.** “Governor Hochul could lead us forward with affordable clean energy and lower utility bills, but instead, she is trying to take us backward and locking in a future with more asthma, extreme weather, and sky-high gas bills. We hope she makes the right choice and protects kids, not polluters.”

“Billions of dollars in clean-energy investments came to New York because the rules were clear and reliable. Rewriting them midstream signals our commitments are negotiable—putting jobs and investments at risk. Moving the goalposts now won't help families struggling to pay increasingly higher energy bills and make ends meet. It will protect the status quo and lock in higher costs for years. New York should be accelerating the transition, not signaling a retreat. We call on the legislature to stand by the CLCPA.” **said Lisa Marshall, Director of Organizing and Advocacy, New Yorkers for Clean Power**