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Before Adjourning, Pass a New Power Plant Siting Law



By Arthur (Jerry) Kremer

New York needs more power. Studies have shown it. And common sense demands it.

It's no secret that since the great 2003 blackout that New York, our state, has been woefully unprepared for New York's growing demand for baseload energy. Add to that the state's reliance on an antiquated grid and a decades-old transmission infrastructure and there is no wonder why New Yorkers of every ideological stripe are rightfully calling on lawmakers to secure their energy future.

We have seen some strong efforts designed to address these pressing matters. Governor Paterson, Mayor Bloomberg and legislative leaders have focused significant attention and resources to promote greater efficiencies in our homes and businesses. President Obama's federal stimulus package will also focus needed resources on improving our energy infrastructure and supporting new energy initiatives, such as an upstate high-speed rail.

Yet despite these worthy initiatives, a new, comprehensive statewide power plant siting law has yet to be adopted. And there is no more critical time for our leaders to join together to enact this needed legislation.

The simple act of passing a new, comprehensive power plant siting law will create the opportunity for new jobs, facilitate new investment and all New Yorkers with the reassurance that our lights will stay on during high-demand periods, such as the approaching Summer months. It will also curtail the current practice of siting, construction and operation of smaller, "peaker" plants which unleash tons of pollution into the air we breathe.

No matter how you slice it, energy conservation and new efficiencies can only do so much to support our growing demand for power across the state. Through the passage and enactment of a new power plant siting law, lawmakers can supply the last – and most needed part of the plans for New York's energy future.

Arthur (Jerry) Kremer is Chairman of the New York Affordable Reliable Electricity Alliance and co-author of the original Power Plant Siting Law in New York. He served in the State Assembly for 23 years, including 12 as Chair of the Assembly Ways and Means Committee.

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