

Utilize Stimulus Funds to Rebuild our Energy Infrastructure



By Gary LaBarbera

New York City, with its famously "lit-up" skyline, is keeping its lights on by depending on power plants and power transmission infrastructure that in many cases pre-date World War II. If New York City truly intends to remain a world class place to live, work and visit we must address the toll that the hand of time is taking on our energy infrastructure.

Funding on its way from the Obama Administration to help improve New York City's infrastructure couldn't have come at a better time. The need for infrastructure upgrades and replacements are apparent and the working men and women of our city's building trades need the jobs.

Throughout New York City high-rise buildings that dot our skyline are essentially vertical towns and cities, housing hundreds of families and workers. Each apartment or office requires significant electricity and power transmission to distribute the voltage that keeps New York City going.

While still providing energy reliability for the time being, the current infrastructure is vastly in need of an overhaul to handle growth projected by Mayor Bloomberg's long-range PlaNYC. If we don't keep pace, or at minimum modernize and catch up, New York City will lose that edge.

State leaders in Albany need to take steps to ensure our electricity supply and distribution remains secure. If it were not for the current recession and subsequent fall off in business and jobs, New York City would likely be trapped in an energy supply crunch of its own making. We can't allow that to occur.

We must take action to use this current lull in the economy to prime the pump and authorize important projects to put highly skilled union workers to the job of rebuilding our city and state infrastructure, including old power plants, aging roads, and transportation systems.

Gary LaBarbera is the President of the Building & Construction Trades Council of Greater New York, which consists of local affiliates of 15 national and international unions representing 100,000 working men and women in New York City

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The New York Affordable Reliable Electricity Alliance (New York AREA) is a diverse group of business, labor, environmental, and community leaders working together for clean, low-cost and reliable electricity solutions that foster prosperity and jobs for the Empire State.

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