

# New York Needs Smart Energy Policy



By Michael Durant

While the media continue to report that the economy has slowly embarked on a comeback, small business owners in New York State are still holding their breath and treading water. Owning and operating a small business in New York has never been easy, even during so-called "boom times." The era of \$4.00 gasoline is particularly difficult.

We all know that New York State has some of the highest taxes in the nation. What you may not know is that New York State also has the third-highest electricity costs in the nation. Combine this with endless mandates on small business and New York's byzantine maze of endless regulation. It's easy to see why small business has demanded action at the state level. Governor Cuomo is off to a strong start, but much work still needs to be done.

Electricity rates are among the top ten issues confronting small businesses. While there are many business conditions beyond the control of officials at the state level, there are measures that our state leaders can take to create an energy policy that protects the environment but also helps grow the economy.

First, the state legislature needs to pass a new power plant siting law. The old Article X statute expired in 2002. Without such a streamlined measure in place, investors will continue to be reluctant to invest in new power generation within the Empire State.

As an unintended consequence, New York business has long been forced to depend on older, less efficient and more costly power generating systems. A new, comprehensive and fuel-neutral power plant siting law would lend itself to more efficient electrical generation, invite the growth of renewables, stabilize electricity costs and create thousands of good-paying jobs that will unleash a positive ripple effect on local economies. It's a true "win-win" for all New Yorkers.

New York's small businesses, which drive our state's economy, continue to face challenges. Our elected officials can help by developing a sound and sensible energy policy that increases supply and lowers the cost of doing business here.

*Michael Durant is the Acting New York State Director of the National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB), New York's leading small business advocacy organization representing approximately 10,000 New York State businesses.*

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