

Smart Grid = Clean Environment



By Melvin Burruss, Esq.

An effective energy policy for New York State must make economic sense and offer clear environmental benefits. To achieve this goal our state must aggressively continue taking steps toward the integration of smart grid technology.

While New York State has made commendable progress in reducing its carbon footprint, there is still an over-reliance on aging fossil fuel-burning power plants. Much of the downstate region has been designated by the U.S. EPA as non-attainment areas for poor air quality. The American Lung Association's 2010 State of the Air Report has Queens and New York (Manhattan) Counties tied for the second dirtiest counties for short-term particle pollution, the Bronx is the dirtiest county for the highest annual and short-term levels of particle pollution for any county on the nation.

The Journal of Natural Resources & Environmental Law has shown that pollutants from fossil-fuel power plants are linked to asthma, premature death, respiratory and cardiovascular disease. Since African Americans live in more polluted areas, this has a lasting affect on both their respiratory and cardiovascular systems.

New York must continue to use our existing sources of affordable, clean and reliable electricity sources such as Indian Point and the state's other nuclear power plants. The state legislature must also adopt a comprehensive power plant siting law to expedite the development of new, clean sources of energy to fortify our energy supply, create jobs and ultimately grow our economy.

The continued development of smart grid technology is also critical to an effective statewide energy policy. Delivering electricity from suppliers to consumers using two-way digital communications, this technology will ultimately lead to greater use of household functions during off-peak hours, such as dishwashing and the charging of electric vehicles.

By digitally monitoring power supply and demand in real time, we can notably improve energy efficiency, reduce energy consumption and costs, fortify the stability of our energy supply and avoid increased reliance on "peaker" units, while creating lasting environmental benefits as a result.

The use of smart grid technology will ultimately benefit consumers, businesses, power producers and the environment. Our leaders in Albany and Washington should continue to make the development and implementation of smart grid technology a top priority in 2011.

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