



NY's Energy and the Environmental Goals Not Divergent



By Arthur (Jerry) Kremer

Many years ago, energy policy was nothing more than making sure that enough coal was going to arrive at the local power plant. But today, as concerns about global warming and air quality are at the forefront of the public and legislative agendas, energy and environmental policies must be developed in unison.

Compared with the rest of the nation, New York's energy portfolio has a low reliance on fossil fuel power plants. The U.S. Energy Information Association reported in May 2007 that 5,879 megawatt hours, or 51 percent, of New York State's total electricity generation came from hydroelectric and nuclear sources, which have negligible carbon emissions.

Developing new renewable energy source while keeping our current hydro and nuclear facilities online is critical to meet the greenhouse gas reductions goals of the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI), Mayor Bloomberg's PlaNYC 2030, and the Ozone Transport Commission (OTC).

Not only will these ambitious cuts in greenhouse gas emissions (up to 27 %) improve our environment overall, but the improvements in air quality will benefit the health of the public. Millions of New Yorkers could be breathing cleaner air every day.

While we need every available kilowatt of electricity to fuel our growing economy, to achieve better air quality and reduce greenhouse gas emissions in New York, we must:

- Promote new, clean energy technologies and renewable energy sources
- Support conservation and efficiency initiatives
- Increase the use of mass transit and reduce vehicular traffic on the streets and highways
- Maintain all of our current base-load sources of power, especially clean hydro and nuclear facilities

There is another side to the energy policy coin: How can we increase energy supply, meet our environmental goals, and at the same time foster economic growth and job creation? The options to meet these goals are fairly straightforward. However, putting these options into practice requires tough decisions and firm leadership.

Renewing the Article X power plant siting law would be a big step forward in New York State, allowing us to develop much-needed power sources and paving the way for development of new, more efficient and cleaner sources of power.

New York's energy and environmental agendas are not divergent. With that in mind, let's put some realistic options on the table and move forward with new policies to keep New York State a national leader.

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The New York Affordable Reliable Electricity Alliance (New York AREA) is a diverse group of business, labor, 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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