



February 22, 2016

Hon. John Flanagan
Senate Majority Leader
Room 332 State Capitol
Albany, NY 12247

Hon. Carl Heastie
Speaker of the Assembly
LOB 932
Albany, NY 12248

Hon. Andrea Stewart-Cousins
Senate Democratic Conference Leader
LOB 907
Albany, NY 12247

Hon. Brian Kolb
Assembly Minority Leader
LOB 933
Albany, NY 12248

Hon. Jeffrey Klein
Independent Democratic Conference Leader
LOB 913
Albany, NY 12247

Dear Senate Majority Leader Flanagan, Assembly Speaker Heastie, and legislative leaders:

We are members of NY Renews, a collaboration of community-based organizations, environmental justice groups, labor unions, faith groups, environmentalists, business leaders, and other advocates. The State Budget is the single greatest responsibility legislators have – and with that responsibility is a great opportunity to lead.

The impacts of climate change are affecting New York's economic security, safety, and public health. Poor air quality, which is worsened by climate change, is making our children sick and shortening the lives of seniors. Extreme weather events place people in danger, and cost billions in lost production and revenue, as well as damaged or destroyed communities.

The Governor has proposed aggressive targets for ramping up the use of clean, renewable energy, and reducing carbon emissions that harm our public health and economy.¹ If achieved, New York's economy will be powered by 100% clean energy in less than 34 years. The Governor's budget includes good elements, but it also raises concerns. As the global financial and media capital, the nation – and indeed the world – needs New York to lead on climate and show how embracing challenges and opportunities with aggressive action delivers a more just and equitable economy. **Thus, we write to urge you to show leadership by crafting a 2016-17 State Budget that positions New York as a true national climate leader.**

¹ 2015 New York State Energy Plan: The Energy to Lead – Volume 1 (pg. 112). <http://energyplan.ny.gov/Plans/2015>

The Governor has staked 2016 as a pivotal year. There are many ways the Legislature's leadership can move us forward. Here is how you can act:

- Reject the \$23 million raid of the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) for tax credits, and direct NYSERDA to allocate \$15M for the green workforce development at public higher education institutions. RGGI Carbon funds should not support the state budget;
- Redirect the \$340 million of settlement funds from the Governor's proposal to subsidize Thruway driving in future years to initiatives that instead support a clean energy economy (e.g. electric vehicle purchases, rapid development of offshore wind resources, statewide mass transit, and workforce development and worker transition programs);
- Ensure that all communities experiencing permanent power plant retirements have the resources they need to make just transitions, including budget and property tax relief for school districts and municipalities, and local, community guided workforce development and education programs;
- Ensure full funding and implementation of the Green Jobs-Green New York Act, and keep interest rates low and accessible to middle-income New Yorkers; and
- Support the Governor's proposal to fund locally led community resilience and carbon pollution reduction efforts of New York's Climate Smart Communities.

The call for climate action transcends regional boundaries, political affiliations, age, race/ethnicity, religion, and socio-economic status. Few actions you can take are more unifying than cleaning our air and growing our green economy. We trust that you are on the side of the millions of New Yorkers who know climate change is happening, is caused by humans, and that the time to act is now.

The Governor has called on the Public Service Commission to set rules to achieve 50% clean electricity by 2030, and for the closing of all coal-fired power plants by 2020. However, these initiatives alone do not place New York even close to being on par with climate leaders that have made their goals legally binding. New York needs not only to codify strong climate goals, but set clear and accountable mandates for doing so equitably, considering environmental justice, and creating good jobs.

This goes beyond the budget, but it does start there by setting clear priorities in spending. This session, New York needs legislation that sets into law firm climate and clean energy goals to establish a just energy policy, pursue environmental justice for affected communities, and create clean energy jobs throughout New York State.

Now is the time when bold leadership can make a difference. NY Renews looks forward to partnering with you on a state budget and enacting new policy measures that will guide our state to an economically sound, just, and equitable clean energy future.

Sincerely,

Bill Lipton
Director
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Environmental Advocates of New York

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CC:

Senator Catharine Young, Chair, Finance Committee
Assemblymember Herman "Denny" Farrell, Chair, Ways and Means Committee
Senator Tom O'Mara, Chair, Environmental Conservation Committee
Assemblyman Steven Englebright, Chair, Environmental Conservation Committee
Senator Brad Hoylman, Ranking Member, Environmental Conservation Committee
Assemblyman Dan Stec, Ranking Member, Environmental Conservation Committee