

Build Public Renewable Power Through Expansion of NYPA

Whereas, the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the overwhelming majority of climate scientists have stated we have about 8 years to dramatically cut the burning of fossil fuels if we are to avoid devastating consequences, including an increase in the already rising rate of fires, floods, droughts, and food and water shortages; and

Whereas, the burning of fossil fuels such as coal, oil, and natural gas for energy and transportation is the primary source of climate changing greenhouse gas emissions; and

Whereas, The New York Power Authority (NYPA) is the nation's largest state-owned utility, with a strong track record of providing reliable, affordable energy; and

Whereas, NYPA already powers the Metropolitan Transit Authority, NYCHA housing, public buildings, including CUNY, and small businesses across the state with cheaper, more reliable, and largely renewable electricity; and

Whereas, many New Yorkers, including our members, our students, and their families, have already experienced devastating losses from severe weather associated with climate changes such as hurricanes, wind storms and flooding; and

Whereas, the AFT already supports the Green New Deal that includes rapid decarbonization including a rapid increase in renewable energy; and

Whereas, Trade Unions for Energy Democracy (TUED) research has shown that markets have failed to create a sufficiently rapid transition towards a low carbon economy, thereby necessitating a strong role for the public sector and democratic control to press the measures required to accelerate the transition from burning fossil fuels to generate electricity; and

Whereas, in New York State, investor owned utilities prioritize delivering profits to shareholders, leading to inadequate preparation for severe weather and inadequate emergency response to the related power outages¹; and

Whereas, these utilities' poor equipment maintenance further undermines their capacity to upgrade quickly enough to enable the rapid transition essential to quickly transition to clean energy; and

¹ Four private utilities (Con Edison, Orange & Rockland Utilities, Central Hudson Gas and Electric, and Frontier Communications) were fined \$86.2 million for extended power outages and inadequate emergency response in the wake of storm Isaias. Investigations by the Long Island Power Authority found that its PSEG operator was also inadequately prepared for severe storms, leaving thousands of residents without power.

Whereas, under current law, NYPA cannot own or build more than six new utility-scale renewable generation projects; and

Whereas, NYPA has the capital and high bond rating to be able to build large renewable energy plants to complement any smaller-scaled and community power generation; therefore,

Be it resolved that:

NYSUT supports the Build Public Renewables Act (A1466A/S6453) to expand public power in order to accelerate the transition away from burning fossil fuels for energy; and

NYSUT informs its locals how public power will facilitate democratic accountability and achieve the renewable energy goals for their communities and for NYS.

Sources:

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Mark Harrington, "[LIPA report details PSEG LI's failures in Isaias storm response](#)," Newsday (November 17, 2020)

New York State Department of Financial Services, "[Governor Cuomo Announces \\$86.2 Million In Settlements With 4 Utilities for Failures Related To Power Outages and Emergency Response Including Tropical Storm Isaias](#)" (July 15, 2021)

Sean Sweeney and John Treat, "[Energy Transition: Are We Winning?](#)" Trade Unions for Energy Democracy (January 2017)

Sean Sweeney, Kylie Benton-Connell, and Lara Skinner, "[Power to the People: Toward Democratic Control of Energy Generation](#)", Trade Unions for Energy Democracy (June 2015)