



Canal Society
of New York State
www.newyorkcanals.org

February 28, 2021

Dear Friends,

Just a few days ago an amendment was released to the Governor's 2021-2022 proposed budget, which must be approved by the Legislature before April 1st. This last minute proposal could result in dramatic changes to the organization and operation of our State's historic canal system with little opportunity for review, comment, or engagement by the citizens, businesses and communities who would be affected.

I am very concerned. Others share this concern. The amendment is now in the hands of the State Legislature. The Preservation League of New York State and Canal New York have asked that the Legislature withdraw this amendment to allow more careful consideration of the Act's consequences. I have written my Senate and Assembly members to also ask for this pause, simply asking that "the Legislature set aside the New York State Canal System Revitalization Act from deliberations dealing with the 2021-22 budget for more careful consideration in the future." May I ask you to do the same? Our public input at this time-sensitive moment will make all the difference.

This New York State Canal System Revitalization Act abolishes the Canal Recreationway Commission and creates a new governing authority that may reduce still further public accountability and protections of our historic waterway. It mischaracterizes our canal infrastructure as "antiquated and deteriorating" instead of highlighting the system's recent designation as a National Historic Landmark, our nation's highest honor.

The complete text of the New York State Canal System Revitalization Act can be found at <https://www.budget.ny.gov/pubs/archive/fy22/ex/30day/led-artvii-newpart-vv.pdf>

For the statement of the Preservation League, please see - <https://www.preservenys.org/advocacy-updates/response-to-governor-cuomos-30-day-budget-amendment-canal-system-revitalization-act-proposal>

Perhaps some of the Revitalization Act suggestions are positive. To rush approval of such suggestions in the few remaining days of the budget process will be a disservice to that potential. Perhaps an even greater opportunity is the hope that this proposal could be the stepping stone to a more thoughtful public consideration of the future of our iconic New York State waterway. The Canal belongs to the people of New York State and we must care for it.

Thanks!

Sincerely,

Craig Williams
President, Board of Directors