

OPINION

ALBANY

State's climate plan is no longer achievable — or affordable

As emissions targets lag and ratepayer costs rise, state leaders must begin building a realistic energy policy, writes leader of the business group Upstate United.

Justin Wilcox *Guest Opinion*

The Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA), New York's sweeping 2019 law requiring dramatic reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, is no longer financially feasible or practically achievable, and state leaders know it.

For years, Upstate United has raised serious concerns about the aggressive timeline and top-down mandates embedded in the CLCPA. Our concerns have only grown as the state pushed forward without an honest accounting of either the costs or the changing circumstances since the law's passage.

While we support smart, sustainable efforts to reduce emissions, rushed implementation and unchecked costs have created an energy policy that is unrealistic, unsustainable and increasingly unaffordable for New Yorkers.

Deadlines have been missed. Key programs, including Cap-and-Invest, Advanced Clean Cars II and the Advanced Clean Truck Rule, have been delayed or paused indefinitely.

And perhaps most sobering of all, since 1990, New York has reduced greenhouse gas emissions by just 9.4%, far short of the 40% reduction

legally required by 2030. Moreover, NYSERDA's own modeling confirms that there are no plausible scenarios in which the state can meet these statutory targets.

RATEPAYERS' BURDEN

At the same time, the financial burden on ratepayers is skyrocketing. A 2023 analysis from the state Department of Public Service revealed that over \$40 billion in CLCPA-related costs have already been approved, much of which will be unknowingly passed on to consumers through their utility bills. In 2022 alone, \$1.2 billion in CLCPA charges were embedded in monthly bills. The Public Service Commission has yet to release cost updates for 2023 or 2024, leaving the public in the dark as these hidden taxes continue to grow.

And the bills are only getting bigger. The state is now proposing an additional \$5.4 billion in surcharges to support electrification and energy efficiency efforts, on top of billions already allocated to offshore wind, battery storage, EV infrastructure and expansive transmission projects.

The governor's statement that she has "slowed things down" because, as she says, "we cannot reach those objectives" is illustrative of an emerging realization and a dangerous disconnect. The CLCPA is the law, and those "objectives" are not goals, they are legally required mandates. From driving up utility bills to deterring site selectors from choosing New York as a place to attract and retain major economic development opportunities, these mandates make it increasingly more difficult to remain competitive.

ACHIEVABLE ENERGY POLICY

We cannot continue to act as though the CLCPA's legally required mandates remain achievable or affordable for businesses or everyday New Yorkers under today's conditions. Nor can state leaders continue making major decisions related to policy and spending that recognize the CLCPA as the law one day and dismiss it the next.

As we have said before, one more ad hoc policy announcement or energy initiative made public by press release is no substitute for a real plan. It is time for state leaders to pause the CLCPA, acknowledge reality, and commit to building a comprehensive, transparent and achievable energy policy. That policy must clearly define realistic targets based on current conditions and today's challenges, include full cost projections and trade-off analyses, and prioritize long-term energy reliability, as well as transparency regarding the costs to New Yorkers.

But above all, the policy must acknowledge that the CLCPA, as envisioned in 2019, is no longer attainable.

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