

# Sheridan Hollow Alliance For Renewable Energy

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## **Climate Groups Urge Lawmakers to Commit to Convert State Capitol to 100% Renewable Energy Following OGS Budget Testimony**

Climate justice advocates were stunned on Wednesday to hear that the Hochul administration planned to take ten years to achieve only a 50% reduction in fossil fuel emissions at the State Plaza complex.

SHARE (Sheridan Hollow Alliance for Renewable Energy), a coalition of dozens of climate, faith, labor and community groups, was able five years ago to convince state lawmakers to pull the plug on Governor Cuomo's 2017 proposal to add two new fracked gas turbines to the Sheridan Avenue Steam Plant and use the funds for renewable projects at the Capitol and Plaza. Two years ago, the New York Power Authority (NYPA) and the Office of General Services (OGS) commissioned a study to create an Energy Master Plan for the plaza that was slated to be released over the summer but has still not been released.

"Time is wasting. NYPA and OGS have already been working on renewable solutions for the Capitol and Plaza for five years. It's time to get the work done. SHARE calls on lawmakers to amend Governor Hochul's budget proposal to include the Renewable Capitol Act, which would commit the state to a rapid conversion of the entire Capitol Complex to 100% renewable energy within three years. The State of Michigan recently took 18 months from start to finish to convert its state capitol to geothermal energy, as Oklahoma and Colorado had done previously. Taking an additional ten years to do only half the work isn't acceptable," said Albany County Legislator Mert Simpson, Co-Chair of SHARE.

"A mere 50% reduction in fossil fuel emissions over ten years is not consistent with the state's new climate law. OGS and NYPA have clearly gone down the wrong path with the design of their study. Based on what we have been told so far, they have not looked at common sense measures like converting the state Capitol to use geothermal energy for heating and cooling," added Ruth Foster, Co-Chair of SHARE. "New York's Climate Law, requires a 40% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions in just six years. If New York's government can't meet its own climate goals, how can we expect private industry to meet these goals?"

Converting the state Capitol to 100% clean renewable energy is a critical environmental justice issue. For more than a century the state has polluted a low-income African American community to power the Capitol Complex, at various times burning coal, oil, gas, and garbage. State health data shows a significant cancer cluster near the plant on Sheridan Avenue. In rejecting Cuomo's proposal to expand fossil fuel burning in the community, state

lawmakers directed NYPA and OGS to instead spend the \$88 million appropriation to the extent practical on renewable energy. While energy improvements have been made, progress has been much slower than expected, leading lawmakers to propose the Renewable Capitol Act (A5633 / S2689). The bill passed Senate Finance two years ago and likely would have passed in the Senate if the Assembly had been willing to act.

SHARE calls on NYPA and OGS to keep their commitment to an open public process to redesigning the state Capitol Complex so that it complies with New York's climate goals. This public process must include consulting with the residents of the Albany communities that are directly impacted, climate organizations that helped pass the climate law, and all who have the expertise to develop solutions.

The only real debate is the question of when - not if - the state will start the job of converting the Capitol to renewable energy and when they will complete it. Michigan's recent 18-month conversion of its Capitol to geothermal along with electric upgrades resulted in a 25% reduction in their annual energy bill.

Commissioner of OGS, Jeanette M. Moy, in her state budget testimony on January 30<sup>th</sup> announced that OGS plans to take ten years to reduce emissions in the Empire State Plaza (ESP) by 50%. Meanwhile, the slow pace of government action on climate has led the Secretary General of the UN to declare that the world has opened the Gates to Hell, while scientists debate how close global warming came to the 1.5 C target in 2023, with some reports saying that it was exceeded.

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