



# Sheridan Hollow Alliance for Renewable Energy

[www.sharealbany.org](http://www.sharealbany.org)

**For immediate release:** May 16, 2024

For more information, contact: Bob Cohen at [bcohen@citizenactionny.org](mailto:bcohen@citizenactionny.org) or 518-265-6183 or Mark Dunlea at [dunleamark@aol.com](mailto:dunleamark@aol.com) or 518-860-3725

## **SHARE Blasts Hochul Administration for Withholding Data on the Renewable Capitol Project, Thus Delaying Climate Action**

*New Study Shows How State Can Convert State Capitol Complex to Geothermal Energy*

**ALBANY** -- The Sheridan Hollow Alliance for Renewable Energy (SHARE), a coalition of Capital area residents and statewide advocates, took the Hochul administration to task today for withholding information for months regarding a feasibility study on reducing greenhouse gas emissions from the Capitol and Empire State Plaza (ESP). SHARE called upon the Legislature to pass the Renewable Capitol Act, legislation to mandate that the state convert the Capitol complex to renewables.

The coalition also released today a report by geothermal expert Jay Egg and SHARE's science team demonstrating how the heating and cooling needs of the ESP can be met without fossil fuels. (The report can be accessed [here](#).)

“For years, SHARE has been calling for conversion of the Capitol complex to renewables, alleviating the historic harms to Sheridan Hollow and other area Albany neighborhoods,” said **Mert Simpson, who represents the neighborhood in the Albany County Legislature and a SHARE co-chair**. “The state has insinuated that converting to renewables is technologically infeasible or too costly without providing any evidence to back up these claims. The Renewable Capitol Act has a process to consider these questions with public input. It’s time for the Legislature to step in and address the state’s contributions to the climate crisis, including state buildings.”

The Renewable Capitol Act (S2689-C/A5633-B) mandates a conversion of Capitol complex to renewable energy within three years. The Senate included the Act in its “one-house” budget resolution, and the Senate Energy Committee advanced the bill last week.

“The geothermal report outlines feasible renewable technologies that can be implemented to heat and cool the Empire State Plaza and thereby eliminate the need for fossil fuel combustion at the Sheridan Avenue Steam Plant,” said **David Musser of SHARE’s science team**. “The report

-- more --

discusses proven geothermal technologies and thermal load-sharing techniques. It also provides real-world examples of large-scale renewable heating and cooling projects built elsewhere, including other states that have already replaced outdated steam-based systems at their capitals with modern geothermal technology. The report highlights what our state can achieve through innovation.”

[Michigan](#) recently converted its Capitol building to geothermal energy in 18 months from study to finish at a total cost of \$78 million. The project employed about 500 workers in various building trades including electrical, plumbing, and excavation. The Oklahoma and Colorado capitol buildings also use geothermal, as does St. Patrick’s Cathedral in Manhattan and several projects now under construction in Brooklyn.

SHARE also called upon the [Office of General Services \(OGS\) Commissioner Moy](#) to provide evidence to support statements at January budget hearings that she only expects to reduce ESP greenhouse emissions by 50% in the next decade.

“State lawmakers cannot allow the Hochel administration to use rumors and unsubstantiated statements to continue to block essential climate action. The UN Secretary General has repeatedly warned political leaders that we are out of time to avoid climate disaster,” said **Ruth Foster, also a SHARE co-chair**. “Decarbonizing the Capitol Complex is the right thing to do to address the climate crisis and is required by our state’s 2019 climate law, the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act.”

The group urged state lawmakers to hold the Hochul administration accountable, starting with insisting that the New York Power Authority release its long-delayed ESP energy study. Despite Freedom of Information filings and requests from legislators, OGS and NYPA have failed to release any background information on the study that was due to be completed over a year ago.

SHARE notes that to comply with the CLCPA, the question is not whether but when the state will convert to zero emissions. The renewable capitol and similar projects may be expensive upfront, but can provide [significant net benefits, including new](#) jobs and avoided health care costs from less pollution. For over a century, the state burned coal, oil, garbage, and gas at the Sheridan Hollow Steam Plant, located in a low-income community of color, so that politicians could enjoy comfortable office space. SHARE has fought this environmental injustice since 2017. In 2019, state lawmakers rejected Governor Cuomo’s proposal to add two fracked gas turbines to the facility, instead redirecting a \$88 million appropriation to renewable alternatives if practicable. Last year’s state budget directed the Hochul administration to do feasibility studies on decarbonization of the 15 highest emitting state facilities.