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Governor Cuomo Announces 30-Day Amendment to Accelerate Renewable Energy Projects and Drive Economic Growth as Part of Nation-Leading Climate Agenda

Legislation to Create Office of Renewable Energy Permitting

Office Will Streamline Process for Environmentally Responsible and Cost-Effective Siting of Large-Scale Renewable Energy Projects Across the State

Legislation to Speed Up Progress Towards the State Mandate to Obtain 70 Percent of Electricity from Renewable Sources by 2030 and Other Nation-leading Goals of the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today announced he is advancing a 30-day budget amendment to dramatically speed up the permitting and construction of renewable energy projects, combat climate change and grow the state's green economy. If adopted, the Accelerated Renewable Energy Growth and Community Benefit Act will create a new Office of Renewable Energy Permitting to improve and streamline the process for environmentally responsible and cost-effective siting of large-scale renewable energy projects across New York while delivering significant benefits to local communities. Today's announcement will accelerate progress towards Governor Cuomo's nation-leading clean energy and climate goals - including the mandate to obtain 70 percent of the state's electricity from renewable sources - as identified under the state's Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act.

"Climate change is the existential challenge of our time, and New York State has risen to the occasion by enacting the strongest laws in the nation to protect and preserve our environment," **Governor Cuomo said.** "This legislation will help achieve a more sustainable future, invigorating the green economy and reaffirming New York's position as a market leader with a revamped process for building and delivering renewable energy projects faster."

This groundbreaking legislation underscores the state's commitment to developing renewable energy by creating a new siting process specifically designed for renewable energy facilities.

The state's existing energy generation siting process was designed for permitting fossil-fuel electric generating plants and created prior to the current nation-leading clean energy and environmental goals under the CLCPA. This new robust siting process will create modernized standards for developing renewable energy projects at an expedited pace to meet the urgency of the climate crisis. By aligning New York's leading climate and economic development strategies, the legislation will also ensure that renewable energy development is a central part of the state's economic

future and will spur an even greater growth of green jobs. The new structure created by the Act centralizes renewable energy siting and permitting activities within the Department of Economic Development. The structure also creates, separately, a new program through which the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority will collaborate with the Department of Environmental Conservation and Department of Public Service to develop build-ready sites for renewable energy projects. This comprehensive legislation reframes the renewable energy development process with the following major components:

Establish Office of Renewable Energy Permitting:

The Act will consolidate the environmental review and permitting of major renewable energy facilities to provide a single forum in which the Department of Economic Development's (the state agency arm of Empire State Development) new Office of Renewable Energy Permitting, or "Permitting Office," will ensure permitting decisions are predictable, responsible, and delivered on pace to help the State achieve the CLCPA goals.

The new office will:

- Utilize project siting standards that reflect the environmental impacts common to types of renewable projects, and include upfront mitigation measures to address those impacts.
- Develop draft permits for public comment and ensure that complete applications are acted upon within one year, except in the case of certain former commercial and industrial sites, which will be reviewed within six months.

Municipalities will have an opportunity to advise the Office on compliance with local laws and the Permitting Office will consider and may apply local laws in light of the State's clean energy and environmental goals under the CLCPA.

Projects that have already commenced permitting under the current Article 10 process will be able to opt-in to the new permitting process to ensure they can also accelerate their schedule for completion.

Clean Energy Resources Development and Incentives Program:

To ensure that renewable energy development is targeted to the best locations to advance economic development while protecting natural resources, the Act also creates NYSERDA's Clean Energy Resources Development and Incentives Program to rapidly advance new "Build-Ready" projects and prioritize the development of existing or abandoned commercial sites, brownfields, landfills, former industrial sites, and abandoned or otherwise underutilized sites. NYSERDA, in consultation with ESD and other agencies, will immediately begin pursuing site control and pre-construction development activities for potential new renewable energy projects, including permitting and resource feasibility assessments, host community and PILOT agreements, design, planning and other appropriate activities necessary to establish build-ready sites. Once sites are fully permitted and developed, NYSERDA will competitively auction the developed sites, bundled with contracts for renewable energy payments, to provide a fully de-risked package for private developers to construct and operate projects at these sites.

Host Communities Benefit Program:

NYSERDA will also develop a Host Communities Benefit Program for build-ready site property owners and communities to receive incentives to host major renewable energy facilities. In addition, NYSERDA would have a consultative role in the development of Payment in Lieu of Taxes agreements, to ensure a just and level playing field for communities in assessing property taxes.

The Act creates a new program to be established by the Public Service Commission to provide for utility bill discounts for residents of clean energy project host communities. NYSERDA will also create a new Local Workforce Opportunities Fund with clean energy workforce training grants for which host communities would be eligible to apply.

Grid Planning and Energy Delivery Constraint Relief

(Transmission):

Under the Act, the State will also accelerate renewable transmission delivery to ensure that renewable energy can be reliably and cost-effectively transmitted to meet the ambitious renewable development and emissions reduction goals of the CLCPA. The Act establishes an aggressive and comprehensive approach to accelerate the investment in and development of a reliable, state-of-the-art grid including:

- Developing a bulk transmission investment program that not only accelerates development through existing planning and development processes, but also relies upon and fully leverages the New York Power Authority's unique capability to expeditiously construct new transmission, by itself or in partnership with others.
- Applying a streamlined siting process for transmission infrastructure built within existing rights-of-way to timely achieve the State's goals for renewables buildout and emissions reduction.
- Directing NYSERDA, in consultation with the New York Power Authority, the Long Island Power Authority, the state's grid operator and utilities, to conduct a comprehensive study to identify cost-effective distribution, local and bulk electric system upgrades and file the study with the Public Service Commission.
- Directing the Public Service Commission to establish a distribution and local transmission system capital program, with associated milestones and reviews, for each utility in whose service territories local upgrades are deemed necessary.

Collectively, the provisions of the Act will serve to accelerate new private investments and fuel additional job growth in the state's already-thriving clean energy sector. According to NYSERDA's Clean Energy Industry Report, in 2018, nearly 159,000 clean energy workers were employed across the state with the sector growing at more than twice the rate of the overall economy. In the last year alone solar jobs increased by over 10 percent, adding more than 1,000 jobs in a single year according to the National Solar Foundation.

New York State's Green New Deal

Governor Cuomo's Green New Deal is the most aggressive climate and clean energy initiative in the nation, putting the state on a path to being entirely carbon-neutral across all sectors of the economy and establishing a goal to achieve a zero-carbon emissions electricity sector by 2040, faster than any other state. It builds on New York's unprecedented ramp-up of clean energy including a \$2.9 billion investment in 46 large-scale renewable projects across the state, the creation of more than 150,000 jobs in New York's clean energy sector, a commitment to develop nearly 1,700 megawatts of offshore wind by 2024, and 1,700 percent growth in the distributed solar sector since 2012.

The recently passed Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act mandates the Green New Deal's nation-leading clean energy targets: nine gigawatts of offshore wind by 2035, six gigawatts of distributed solar by 2025, and three gigawatts of energy storage by 2030, while calling for an orderly and just transition to clean energy that creates jobs and continues fostering a green economy. The CLCPA also directs New York State agencies and authorities to collaborate with stakeholders to develop a plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 85 percent from 1990 levels by 2050 and aim to invest 40 percent of clean energy and energy efficiency program resources to benefit disadvantaged communities, achieving 70 percent renewable energy by 2030.

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