



OPINION AUGUST 18, 2026

A Tactical Moratorium?



Columnist Bill Carini argues Hochul's data-center moratorium echoes a failed crypto-mining pause and calls for scrutiny of New York's climate policy.

Bill Carini

Editor's note: The ideas expressed in this column are those of author Bill Carini and do not represent the opinions of Tompkins Weekly.

Governor Hochul's recent executive order enacting a one-year moratorium on some new and expanded data centers might appear to be a victory for the overwhelming majority of our population who oppose these blights on our environment. However, the history of betrayals by our Democrat-dominated government provides every reason to view this moratorium with suspicion, and calls for extreme vigilance on our part. The Democrats have proven quite adept at appearing to respond to popular demand while ultimately siding with their billionaire backers.

Climate legislation enacted to much fanfare in 2019, establishing limits on greenhouse gases, was gutted by Hochul and the current legislature in a budget bill passed in May of this year. As Politico reports: "The governor's changes include pushing back a deadline to write emissions regulations from 2024 to the end of 2028, effectively neutering a 2030 target in favor of a less rigid

2040 goal, and changing how emissions are calculated to make it easier to hit the numbers. That followed her unilateral delay of a mandate to electrify new buildings, a deal to keep a gas-powered cryptocurrency mining operation [Greenidge on Seneca Lake] open and approval of a new gas pipeline".

The effect of these changes to the climate law is to pave the way for data centers and their appalling (and pointless) greenhouse gas emissions.

It is instructive to examine the much-vaunted cryptocurrency mining moratorium of 2022. When enacted, the moratorium generated great goodwill among voters, but it expired two years later with hardly anyone noticing. As the end of the two-year period approached, Earthjustice noted: "The law also required the state Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to conduct a comprehensive study on the environmental impact of cryptomining operations across New York State before the end of the two-year pause. With just one month until the end of the moratorium, no such study has been completed. Without it, New York risks giving fossil-fueled cryptomining operations, like Greenidge Generation and Fortistar North Tonawanda/Digihost, the green light to wreak havoc on New York communities without adequate oversight or accountability. It will also further delay New York from meeting its vital climate goals under New York's Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA)."

The 105-megawatt Greenidge plant on Seneca Lake has continued to belch pollution to this day. In fact, in 2025 the Hochul administration issued them a five-year permit to continue operating. A cryptocurrency mining operation is, of course, a type of data center. Greenidge Generation has just announced a rebranding into Vulcan Infrastructure and Power, intending to orient their data center into serving the Artificial Intelligence (AI) market. Their plans involve continuing to operate their 105-megawatt fossil-fueled generator and to draw an additional 200 megawatts from our grid [Gothamist report]. No doubt the increasing demand for power from these data center profiteers is a primary cause of the higher energy costs that we suffer from.

For some reason the wealthy investors of this company don't seem too worried about the governor's temporary moratorium. I wonder why?

As long as we keep voting in the politicians who treat us with such contempt, we will continue to be ruled by leaders who are accountable only to their corporate paymasters. It becomes more and more clear that we need to build a third party which works for the people and not for the corporations.

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