

## **Pragmatic Environmentalist of New York Summary Update January 19, 2026 – February 1, 2026**

This is a summary update of posts at [Pragmatic Environmentalist of New York](#) for the last two weeks. I have been writing about the pragmatic balance of the risks and benefits of environmental initiatives in New York since 2017 with a [recent emphasis](#) on New York's [Climate Leadership & Community Protection Act](#) (Climate Act). If you do not want to be on this mailing list, then let me know. A pdf copy of the following information and previous summaries are also [available](#). The opinions expressed in these articles do not reflect the position of any of my previous employers or any other organization I have been associated with, these comments are mine alone.

There is a fundamental [Climate Leadership & Community Protection Act](#) (Climate Act) implementation issue. Clearly there are bounds on what New York State ratepayers can afford and there are limits related to reliability risks for a system reliant on weather-dependent resources. The problem is that there are no criteria for acceptable affordability bounds. I published several articles about this issue.

### [Stalling the New York Climate Act Pause](#)

On January 28, 2026, the New York State Public Service Commission [issued a notice](#) soliciting comments regarding a petition for a Public Service Commission hearing to temporarily suspend or modify the obligations of the Climate Act if it finds that [Public Service Law \(PSL\) Section 66-P](#) (PSL 66-P), Establishment of a Renewable Energy Program impedes the provision of safe, adequate, and affordable electric service. While on one hand I should be celebrating official recognition of something I have long advocated, on the other hand, the timing is problematic. The evidence of the need for a hearing is overwhelming and this request for comments simply postpones the inevitable hearing.

The [announcement](#) requesting comments stated: "The Public Service Commission is considering a petition, filed on January 6, 2026 (the Petition), by the Coalition for Safe and Reliable Energy requesting that the Commission hold a hearing, pursuant to Section 66-p of the Public Service Law, to evaluate whether to temporarily suspend or modify the targets or provisions under the Renewable Energy Program established as part of the Climate Act.

The Legislature included PSL 66-P precisely to address the situation New York now faces: implementation challenges that threaten reliability and affordability emerging as the aggressive timelines and technology requirements of the Climate Act confront real-world supply chain, permitting, interconnection, and technological readiness constraints.

Clearly it is no longer possible for the Hochul Administration to ignore the adverse impacts of Climate Act Implementation. I have [long argued](#) that PSL 66-P was a logical excuse to reconsider the ramifications of the Climate Act. This response is more evidence that the Climate Act has always been more about political catering to constituencies than about saving the planet. This request for comments pushes the hearing and any decision related to the hearing beyond the election next November. The question is whether New Yorkers will catch on that the Hochul Administration is risking reliability and affordability to appease Climate Act proponents.

### [New York Climate Act Affordability Status](#)

The PSC announcement for comments on the Coalition petition came out the day after this article was published. This article documents unresolved affordability issues associated with the Climate Act that I argued make the hearing necessary.

I earlier described [recent filings](#) that argued that the PSC should convene a hearing. On August 11, 2025 “Independent Intervenors” Richard Ellenbogen, Constatine Kontogiannis, Francis Menton and I [petitioned](#) the PSC arguing that safety valve provisions for [customers in arrears trends](#) in PSL 66-p(4) have been exceeded which should trigger a hearing. On January 6, 2026 the Coalition for Safe and Reliable Energy filed a petition with the Public Service Commission (PSC) [requesting](#) that the Commission act expeditiously to hold a hearing pursuant to Public Service Law § 66-p (4). Both filings make similar arguments. The Independent Intervenors argued that there was an explicit requirement for the hearing because the customers in arrears threshold has been exceeded. The Coalition makes a persuasive argument that there are sufficient observed threats to reliability that a hearing is necessary to ensure safe and adequate service. The PSC announcement only addressed the Coalition petition.

I am sure that the comments submitted by supporters of the Climate Act will argue that Climate Act implementation is not affecting affordability. My article noted that Assistant Attorney General Meredith G. Lee-Clark submitted correspondence related to the [litigation](#) associated with Climate Act implementation last year. The [State’s submittal](#) argued that it was inappropriate to implement regulations that would ensure compliance with the 2030 40% reduction in GHG emissions Climate Act mandate because meeting the target is “currently infeasible”. The letter concluded that the Climate Act is unaffordable:

Petitioners have not shown a plausible scenario where the 2030 greenhouse gas reduction goal can be achieved without inflicting unanticipated and undue harm on New York consumers, and the concrete analysis in the 2025 Draft Energy Plan dispels any uncertainty on the topic: New Yorkers will face alarming financial consequences if speed is given preference over sustainability.

My article went on to describe New York Agency findings that argue that observed issues with schedule and costs suggest a pause to reconsider the mandates is appropriate. Ultimately, I believe the issue that Climate Act proponents must address is just what is “affordable”. I included an extensive section that describes affordability metrics. Whatever affordability standard is chosen a clear reporting metric must be provided and frequent updates of the status of the implementation relative to the affordability standard provided.

Hopefully, someday there will be a hearing and the Hochul Administration and Legislature will acknowledge the need to modify the Climate Act and PSL 66-P to incorporate clear affordability metrics, a transparent tracking system, or mandatory corrective actions when affordability thresholds are exceeded.

## [New York Recent Rate Case Impacts on Residential Customers](#)

This post summarizes recent residential electric utility customers rate case [decisions approved between March 2025 and January 2026](#). I did not discuss gas rate cases. The New York Public Service Commission (PSC) “approved new multi-year rate plans for five major utilities—Con Edison, National Grid, Central Hudson, and Orange & Rockland—while two additional utilities (New York State Electric & Gas (NYSEG) and Rochester Gas & Electric (RG&E) have pending rate cases seeking significantly larger increases”. These rate increases arrive amid an escalating affordability crisis, [as of December 2024](#), over 1.3 million households are behind on their energy bills by sixty-days-or-more, collectively owing more than \$1.8 billion.

Figure 1 summarizes the recent rates cases for Con Edison, National Grid, Central Hudson, and Orange & Rockland that have been completed since 2025. NYSEG and RG&E have pending rate cases, so their results shown are not directly comparable.

**Figure 1: New York Utility Rate Cases Impact on Residential Customer (2025-2026) - Perplexity**

Utility	Decision Date	Status	Electric Impact (Typical Residential)	Gas Impact (Typical Residential)	Key Notes
Con Edison	Jan 22, 2026	Approved	~3.5% total bill increase	2.0% total revenue increase	Three-year plan, 87% reduction from initial request
National Grid	Aug 13, 2025	Approved	14.32/mo(3.4	7.66/mo < br > Yr2 :	Cumulative ~\$600/year more by 2028
Central Hudson	Aug 14, 2025	Approved	7.85% total bill (~\$12.65/mo)	9.19% total bill (~\$12.25/mo)	Three-year plan starting Sept 2025
Orange & Rockland	Mar 19, 2025	Approved	2025: 4.6% 2026: 3.3% 2027: 3.5%	2025: 10.9% 2026: 3.5% 2027: 3.8%	Three-year plan
NYSEG	Pending	Under Review	\$33.12/mo requested (23.7% total bill)	\$33.57/mo requested (33.5% total bill)	Decision expected early 2026
RG&E	Pending	Under Review	\$33.01/mo requested (26.0% total bill)	\$18.87/mo requested (22.2% total bill)	Decision expected early 2026

The article describes these results and potential Climate Act effects on the increases. The [Second Informational Report](#) prepared by Department of Public Service (DPS) staff claims residential impacts of the Climate Act range from 4.6% to 10.3% of 2023 total monthly electric bills. I think those estimates are low. Finally, I believe that the PSC decision to respond to the Coalition petition was driven by the politics of these rate case increases.

## [Investments for New York’s Future](#)

According to a [new report](#) from Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) and Greenline Insights, New Yorkers will “realize significant economic benefits, including household savings and new job creation, with the Clean Air Initiative.” This article explains why this report is bogus on multiple levels. This article was thinly disguised lobbying for the [New York Cap-and-Invest](#) (NYCI) program which EDF rebranded as the “Clean Air Initiative” to refresh its image and boost appeal.

I believe the claims are bogus. The report claims that NYCI will ensure compliance with the arbitrary Climate Act emission reduction targets. I believe that NYCI [rations energy use](#) which could cause an

artificial energy shortage if emissions reductions don't materialize as the politicians expect. The report also claims, "The sooner this program is implemented, the sooner communities will see billions in investments that will expand access to cleaner, cheaper energy, cut pollution and create healthier, more resilient communities." However, the analysis is flawed because it ignores opportunity costs which are the benefits that could have been realized if the same resources were deployed differently. . In climate policy analysis, this concept is essential because government spending and regulatory mandates redirect capital, labor, and productive resources from alternative uses. A comprehensive economic evaluation must compare not just the projected benefits of a policy against its direct costs but also assess what economic activity would have occurred absent the intervention—the counterfactual baseline.

This report is simply a lobbying presentation that was commissioned by EDF to support their arguments that NYCI is a good idea. One common aspect of all these analyses is that the benefits are overstated, the costs are minimized if not ignored, and the methodology is sketchy. I do not think that any of the job estimates and economic projections are credible. Finally, the potential that there might be negative impacts is ignored.

#### [Utility Scale Lithium Based Energy Storage Systems](#)

This post describes a recently completed white paper by Richard Ellenbogen M.E.E. titled [The Intrinsic Danger of Siting Utility Scale Lithium Based Energy Storage Systems In Densely Populated Areas](#). This report finds that the local conditions at the proposed large Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) facility in Hauppauge, NY would magnify the impacts of a BESS fire. Ellenbogen has put together an excellent summary of BESS for those looking into issues associated with this technology. His lightly edited Executive Summary states:

This report was written at the request of the Hauppauge Fire Department because of their concerns about a proposed large Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) facility at 111 Rabro Drive. This would be located within 3500 feet of an elementary school, a much less than ideal siting for such a volatile and potentially dangerous facility.

Research on that issue revealed, in addition, that the proposed location is close to streams and has a high-water table. In a location with these characteristics, a lithium-ion battery fire, of the type that frequently has occurred at BESS facilities, could produce long-term, catastrophic environmental damage. This is in addition to the more immediate, very serious threat to people and structures at the school and in nearby neighborhoods from heat and toxic gases in the event of a fire. The body of this report explains these threats in detail and provides background that shows why the occurrence of fire at a BESS facility, like the one proposed, presents such a high level of risk. The readers should be aware in reading this report, that the author received no compensation or payment in kind for the research and writing, but willingly invested the hundreds of hours of work required for its preparation strictly as a result of his great concern for the Hauppauge community, Nassau and Suffolk Counties, the downstate region, and the State of New York in general, inspired by the high level of threat and risk arising from the proposed BESS facility. The report is designed to be read on a network connected device and is arranged with hyperlinks providing backup documentation for each issue should readers wish to learn more about the statements made within.