

Hello, I'm Rich Schrader, New York's Legislative and Policy Director at the Natural Resources Defense Council.

New York has long been a national leader in the fight against climate change and advancing progressive environmental laws and policies. In 2022, New York State added to its impressive list of recent successes by passing the historic Environmental Bond Act, enacting the Cumulative Impacts bill, and imposing a focused crypto-mining moratorium, among other key victories. The state must continue to advance ambitious policies that hold corporations accountable, ensure that the transition to a green economy is affordable for all, and protect our planet.

Our priorities in this new year of 2023 include:

- The All-Electric Heat in New Construction bill, which would mandate electric heat in new buildings no later than December 31, 2023 if the building is less than seven stories and July 1, 2027 if the building is seven stories or more. Buildings account for more than one third of the New York's greenhouse gas emissions, so this bill would contribute to a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and deliver zero emissions buildings as part of our transformation of the building sector.
- The Gas Transition and Affordable Energy bill, renamed NY HEAT (Home Energy Affordability Transition Act), would end customer subsidies for gas industry expansion and create cost protections for low- and moderate-income households.
- Governor Hochul is proposing a series of policies to protect households from exorbitant utility prices while the state transitions to zero-emission buildings. This includes \$200 million in subsidies for more than 800,000 low- and moderate- income utility consumers earning less than \$75,000 a year. It also includes a program to make 20,000 affordable homes efficient and electrified, and provides an energy affordability guarantee for those households so they pay no more than 6% of their income for energy.
- Governor Hochul has previously helped increase New Yorkers' access to federal Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. However, we will be asking her to invest further in SNAP incentive programs that help vulnerable communities access fresh foods and support local farmers.
- The Fashion Act would mandate that all clothing companies operating in New York State, with over \$100 million in revenue, must disclose the environmental footprint for both them and half their supply chain. This includes carbon dioxide and methane emissions, water use, percentage of recyclable materials, chemical management, and workplace conditions. These companies would have to follow certain emissions reductions checkpoints overtime and other metrics to track progress. Furthermore, labor unions are requesting for joints and several liability to be included in the bill, which would give workers more power to sue their employers in the case of injury. The Fashion Act would be a first –of-its-kind law, putting New York at the cutting edge of sustainable fashion.

- In the last days of 2022, Governor Hochul signed into law a bill to ban toxic PFAS chemicals in clothes. Though these chemicals are used to repel water and resist stains in clothes, safer alternatives are needed. PFAS has caused low birth weight, birth defects, and newborn deaths in lab animals. We are now looking to expand the PFAS ban to include paint and other textiles, like rugs and outdoor apparel.
- The Birds and Bees Protection Act would eliminate 80-90% of the neonics entering New York's environment every year by prohibiting uses that provide little-to-no benefit to users or that are easily replaced with safer alternatives. Neonics pesticides which have been linked to mass bee and insect losses, water contamination, ecosystem harm, and public health concerns.
- New York offers \$1.6 billion every year in tax benefits for the fossil fuel industry. The Fossil Fuel Subsidies Elimination Act, renamed Stop Climate Polluters Handouts, would repeal many of the tax breaks that currently exist in support of the oil and gas industry. The bill would eliminate more than \$330 million of the most harmful of these expenditures, which are paid by New York taxpayers. This is also directly related to the Polluters Pay bill, which would create a Polluters Pay Climate Fund to help pay for clean energy and climate action.
- The Good Food New York legislation will empower municipalities to utilize "values-based" standards (e.g., local food, environmental, nutrition, labor) when entering into their large-scale food purchasing contracts. This long overdue reform of state law will help leverage the enormous buying power of New York City and other municipalities to forge a healthier, more sustainable, and equitable food system. It is also likely that the New York City Council will consider separate local legislation to implement similar Good Food purchasing policies.
- Another very important regulatory bill seeks to place limitations on insurance industry investments to limit their investment in fossil fuels. This bill would place restrictions on pension funds larger than \$100 million that operate in New York, giving divestment more teeth and environmental, social, and corporate governance (ESG) efforts more of a solid ground to stand on.
- Currently, New York State law largely prohibits manufacturers of exclusively zero emissions vehicles from selling vehicles directly to consumers, which limits availability and participation among consumers. The Direct EV Sales bill would allow manufacturers to sell directly to customers, providing a zero-cost way for New York to meet its climate goals of net zero emissions by 2040. This bill would also allow EV manufacturers to invest in New York, which would create many new jobs.
- An important budget item in 2023 is the \$400 million expansion of the Environmental Protection Fund to include at least \$25 million for the Ocean and Great Lakes Program. This would enable New York to support and encourage the responsible growth of industries like fishing, tourism, and recreation which continue to generate billions of dollars for the state.

- The Deforestation-Free Procurement Act would create a framework whereby any contractor with \$100 million or more in annual revenue has to certify that their products aren't from the boreal, tropic, or intact forests and doesn't contribute to deforestation. This would apply not only contractors, but their entire supply chain. The Act will update and close loopholes in existing statutes that limit the purchase of tropical hardwoods by the state and local governments.
- Another budget item for 2023 relates to expanding funding for those who need assistance paying overdue water/sewer bills and passing a data reporting law to determine the reach of water/sewer unaffordability, which was vetoed last year due to lack of funding. Many New Yorkers are struggling to access affordable water and sewer services as a result of inflation, the COVID-19 pandemic, and rising costs of housing. The budget should include \$100 million for the Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program to help New Yorkers in need pay off their bills.
- The Flood Insurance Disclosure bill would require disclosure of a property's flood history. The right-to-know bill was passed last year for renters, but a similar measure does not yet exist for home buyers. Such a law can help change patterns of behavior related to flood insurance and not keep New York home buyers in the dark of their property's predisposed climate risk.
- Lastly, in coordination with our partners in the Electrify NY Coalition, we will work to ensure that the Advanced Clean Cars II and Heavy-Duty Omnibus rules become permanent regulations. We are working to expand the Advanced Clean Fleets rule from California to New York, too. Furthermore, we continue to ensure that there is an extensive network of electric vehicle charging stations throughout the state -- focusing on extending the same charging benefits to disadvantaged communities.

While there is a long way to go, working with partners and communities across the state will help get us there. Governor Hochul and the New York legislature must put the environment first and ensure that the communities most vulnerable to the ravages of climate change are at the forefront of their legislative agendas.