

April 9, 2019

A Letter Calling on the NYS Legislature to Support a Green Amendment

Dear New York State Legislature:

We write to express our strongest support for A.2064/S2072, a bill to amend the New York State Constitution to recognize the environmental rights of the people of New York. This legislation would amend Article 1, the Bill of Rights, of the New York State Constitution to insert a new Section 19, recognizing the inalienable and self-executing right of all New Yorkers to clean water, clean air, and healthy environment.

Most New Yorkers are shocked to learn New York's Constitution does not guarantee them a right to drink clean water and breathe clean air. The right to clean water, air and a healthful environment should be as fundamental as a person's right to free speech and assembly. In fact, the right to divorce, to engage in lotteries, and gamble are recognized as inalienable rights that are afforded higher protections under New York law because of their inclusion in the Bill of Rights. New Yorkers deserve better.

It is our firm belief that amending the Bill of Rights to recognize our right to clean water, clean air, and a healthy environment will drive better government decision-making at all levels of government and will prevent situations or conditions in which water becomes too polluted, air too dirty, land too contaminated, and natural landscapes too decimated to support healthy lives, including a healthy economy. Every aspect of our lives from our health, to our property values, to the quality of our lives and recreation are impacted by the health of our environment; as such, protecting our environmental rights is fundamentally important. This amendment to the Bill of Rights complements (i.e. does not displace) Article XIV of the New York State Constitution, the Conservation Article, which calls for protection of the State's natural resources and recognizes environmental protection as important public policy.

Furthermore, enshrining environmental rights sends the message that New York is a true national leader on the environment. Forty-three states or commonwealths have some form of expression of environmental values in their Constitutions; but only the State of Montana and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania have recognized protecting environmental rights as inalienable, putting environmental rights on par with other political and civil liberties. We believe that it is time for New York to do the same and amend its Constitution to recognize the right to clean air and water, and a healthy environment.

We call on you to join us, and the New Yorkers we represent, to support A.2064/S2072; our health and environment depends on taking this forward action. Together we will work for first passage this year, and subsequent passage so that it may be presented to New York voters in 2021.

Sincerely,

Peter Iwanowicz, Environmental Advocates of New York
Maya K. van Rossum, Delaware Riverkeeper Network
Lyna Hinkel, 350NYC
Kevin Chlad, Adirondack Council
Neil F. Woodworth, Adirondack Mountain Club
Tara A Sumner, Advocates for Springfield
Andra Leimanis, Alliance for a Green Economy
Nate Drag, Alliance for the Great Lakes
Tom Pritchard, Arnold Lake Association
Barbara Heinzen, Barbets Duet
Heather Dolin, Bethlehem Indivisible
Jeremy Snyder, Bethlehem Tomorrow
Emily Marynczak, BethlehemNYIndivisible
Justin Green, Big Reuse
Adam Flint, Binghamton Regional Sustainability Coalition
Jennifer Scarlott, Bronx Climate Justice North
Jill Wiener, Catskill Citizens for Safe Energy
Wes Gillingham, Catskill Mountainkeeper
Bob Cohen, Citizen Action of New York
Barbara J Warren, Citizens' Environmental Coalition
Lynn Meyer, Citizens' Climate Lobby of NY
Kathleen A Curtis, Clean and Healthy New York
Maura Stephens, Coalition to Protect New York
Malcolm D Bliss, Common Energy
Anthony Breuer / Donald Hebbard, Compressor Free Franklin
Trellan Smith / Dan Taylor, Concerned Residents of Oxford
Michael Bucci, Deep Green Resistance New York City
Mark Warford, Delmar Farmer's Market
Caroline E Fenner, Dutchess County Progressive Action Alliance
Peter Lehner, Earthjustice
Margaret McCasland, Earthcare Working Group, New York Yearly Meeting (Quakers)
Amy Rosmarin, Earthkeeper Health Resources
Melissa A. Troutman, Earthworks
Doug Couchon, Elmira and Friends Against Fracking
Alex Beauchamp, Food & Water Watch
Irene Weiser, Fossil Free Tompkins
Mary T. Finneran, FrackBustersNY
Yvonne Taylor, Gas Free Seneca
Patti Wood, Grassroots Environmental Education
Maya K. van Rossum, Green Amendments For The Generations
Earl Callahan, Hemp Project New York
Sebastian Askenazy, Indivisible Brooklyn
Wendy Seligson, Jewish Climate Action Network NYC
Laura Bierman, League of Women Voters of New York State
Richard Amper, Long Island Pine Barrens Society
Tammie S. Williams, Long Island Progressive Coalition (LIPC)
Otto Butz, Milford Doers

Kimberly Ong, Natural Resources Defense Council
Jonathan Westin, New York Communities for Change
Mario Cilento, New York State AFL-CIO
Ophra Wolf, Newburgh Clean Water Project
Jerry Rivers, North American Climate, Conservation and Environment (NACCE)
William Huston, NY Friends of Clean Air and Water
Michelle O'Leary, NY Water Project
Eddie Bautista, NYC Environmental Justice Alliance
Elizabeth Moran, NYPIRG
Missy Blowers, Onsight Vision
Sandra Kissam, Orange Residents Against Pilgrim Pipelines
Nicole Dillingham, Otsego 2000, Inc.
Leslie Orzetti, Otsego County Conservation Association
Julie Huntsman, Otsego Neighbors
Nicole Crescimanno, Our Climate
Daniel Griesau / Diana Wright, PAUSE - People of Albany United for Safe Energy
Doug Couchon, People for a Healthy Environment
Peter Hudiburg, Plymouth Friends for Clean Water
Peter Bauer, Protect the Adirondacks
Rahwa Ghirmatzion, PUSH Buffalo
John Gebhards, Quassaick Creek Watershed Alliance
Gerri Wiley, RAFT
Rebecca Bailin, Riders Alliance
Jeremy Cherson, Riverkeeper
Kim Fraczek, Sane Energy Project
Gail Musante, Sanford-Oquaga Area Concerned Citizens (S-OACC)
Grace Nichols, Save the Pine Bush
Tracy Brown, Save the Sound
George Billard, SCRAM
Joseph Campbell, Seneca Lake Guardian, a Waterkeeper Affiliate
Tom Harris, Sierra Club
Austin A Gould, Spartan
Becky Meier, Stop NY Fracked Gas Pipeline
Suzannah Glidden, Stop the Algonquin Pipeline Expansion (SAPE)
Joanna Dickey, Strawtown Studio
Courtney Garneau, Surfrider Foundation
Moe Magali, Surfrider Foundation NYC
Steve Ellsworth, Sustainable McDonough
Jessica Swindon, Sustainable Tompkins
Aaron Jones, TEAM Jones
William Huston, Terra Vigilante / "Earth Watch"
Gusti Bogok, The Green Sanctuary Committee, Community Church of New York, UU
Lorna C Hill, Ujima Company, Inc.