



2/1/2016



*Formation, Organization, and Moving Our Agenda:
A report from our first 18 months.*





WHO WE ARE

The Energy Democracy Alliance is a collaboration of community-based organizations, grassroots groups, and policy experts working together to advance a just and participatory transition to a resilient, localized, and democratically controlled clean energy economy in New York State.

The Energy Democracy Alliance formed in response to New York's Reforming the Energy Vision (REV) proceeding – a state overhaul of energy policy and renewable energy funding. Through the REV process:

- Who will pay for and who will benefit from New York's clean energy transition?
- How will New York's climate goals be achieved?
- Which entities will be allowed to own New York's renewable energy resources?
- How will the state encourage electricity customers to adopt energy saving and energy producing technologies?
- Will the state continue to subsidize renewable energy and energy efficiency and at what level?
- What consumer protections will be in place?
- What regulations will incentivize utilities to facilitate rather than oppose efficiency and renewables?

As New York grapples with its energy vision, the Energy Democracy Alliance has worked to open up opportunities for grassroots and community-based organizations to participate in the decision-making process, push for a more-equitable distribution of the state's energy resources, and gain control over our energy future. The Alliance has also worked to constrain the power of utility companies, predatory financial institutions, and exploitative market actors within the energy system.

OUR VISION UNITES US

The Alliance provides a vehicle through which groups hailing from diverse regions of the state and focusing on a variety of issues can work in concert toward common goals. The Alliance facilitates solidarity and mutual aid across the membership and enables groups to pool their resources, share expertise, and build power together.

The Energy Democracy Alliance member groups focus on a variety of issues, including affordable housing, utility shutoffs, green workforce development, education and advocacy for renewable energy, opposition to dirty energy projects, local sustainability, and more. The REV project touches on all these issues and was instrumental in bringing us together. Finding our common ground and our collective vision has helped cement our working relationships.

While we communicate and collaborate with organizations across New York who are active within REV and/or who share some of our goals, membership in the Energy Democracy Alliance is only open to groups committed to placing economic and racial equity in energy policy at the heart of the work.



A rally outside the final Public Service Commission meeting of 2015. Photo: Minister Erik McGregor

MISSION

The Energy Democracy Alliance advances a just and participatory transition to a resilient, localized, and democratically controlled clean energy economy in New York State. We envision a renewable energy system that is led by and prioritizes solutions for low- and moderate-income communities and communities of color who are most impacted by our current energy and economic system. We transform our communities' relationship to power through advocacy, organizing, job creation, coalition-building, policy research, and public education for an equitable, sustainable energy future.

PRINCIPLES (to be understood as a whole set, rather than individually):

1. New York State should transition quickly and equitably to 100% clean, renewable, fossil-free, nuclear-free energy in order to address climate change, build resilient communities and create economic opportunities.
2. The key pillars of our energy future should be energy efficiency, conservation, climate resilience, and public or community owned or controlled renewable energy assets.
3. The clean energy economy should eliminate environmental, racial and economic injustice and energy insecurity by targeting the benefits of state-funded energy efficiency and distributed renewable energy development to communities confronting those injustices.
4. Every New Yorker should receive the health, economic, and environmental benefits of renewable energy and energy efficiency, regardless of home-ownership status, location, race, wealth, or income.
5. State energy policy should revolve around New Yorkers as energy savers, producers, educators, innovators, owners/investors and, most importantly, decision-makers, not just as “customers.”
6. All institutions that make decisions for the public around energy or energy market development should create mechanisms to ensure widespread and meaningful participation in democratic decision-making, transparency, and public accountability.
7. Public funding should prioritize high quality job creation, with clear career pathways for local people often left out of economic opportunities, including people of color, youth, women, formerly incarcerated individuals, refugees, immigrants, veterans, long-term unemployed and members of frontline climate-vulnerable communities.
8. State energy policy should support the growth and development of democratically controlled institutions such as municipal utilities and cooperative businesses to serve as anchors within their local communities.

HISTORY

The formation of the Energy Democracy Alliance represents a coming together of two previously separate constituencies: the network of community-based organizations involved in implementing the state’s Green Jobs – Green New York program, and the loose network of grassroots organizations fighting a variety of dirty energy industries, including fracked gas, nuclear power, and coal.

The initial call to act collectively on REV was issued by the Alliance for a Green Economy (AGREE), which invited groups across the state to sign onto a preliminary comment in July 2014. The Comment called on the Public Service Commission to incorporate energy democracy, environmental sustainability, affordability, consumer protections, and economic and racial justice into the goals and vision of the REV project. The comment was co-signed by 38 organizations, several of which expressed an interest in continuing to work together within the REV proceeding.



An introductory session at our first convening.

On the eve of the People’s Climate March in September 2014, leaders of AGREE, Binghamton Regional Sustainability Coalition, Catskill Mountainkeeper, The Center for Social Inclusion, PUSH Buffalo, and the Solutions Project met to discuss forming a working relationship to continue pressure around the REV process.

This budding “Energy Democracy Working Group” immediately issued a call to the Public Service Commission to hold public hearings on REV and to otherwise provide opportunities for public education and public input on the energy vision and the policy changes being contemplated. The groups also planned and facilitated a formation convening in November 2014, inviting allies from across the state, with a particular focus on the strong network of groups that had been working to implement Green Jobs – Green New York, as well as organizations with a focus on local power and renewable energy.

Since that initial convening, our alliance has emerged as a recognized and powerful advocacy and organizing force within the REV proceeding, as well as within several important policy proceedings that have spun off from the REV. We have almost exclusively focused our efforts on the regulatory and administrative bodies in New York that drive energy policy and implement clean energy programs: the Public Service Commission and NYSERDA. Together those two agencies, under the leadership of Governor Cuomo, control billions of dollars of public money and oversee the design of utility rates, energy markets, and energy regulations in the state.

Throughout 2015, we succeeded in convincing the Public Service Commission to hold approximately 20 public hearings, mobilized thousands of New Yorkers to action, scored several initial victories, and worked to become better organized internally. We named ourselves the “New York State Energy Democracy Alliance,” ratified a mission and principles, created membership criteria, formed several working groups and task forces, and inaugurated an interim steering committee.

CURRENT MEMBERS

Affordable Housing Partnership Homeownership Center
Alliance for a Green Economy (AGREE)
Binghamton Regional Sustainability Coalition
Catskill Mountainkeeper
Center for Social Inclusion
Citizen Action of New York
Citizens Environmental Coalition
Citizens for Local Power

Good Old Lower East Side (GOLES)
Hudson River Sloop Clearwater
Long Island Progressive Coalition
New York Sustainable Business Council
Nobody Leaves Mid-Hudson
People United for Sustainable Housing (PUSH) Buffalo
Sane Energy Project
Syracuse United Neighbors



Energy Democracy workshop in Buffalo



Pre-hearing REV workshop in Binghamton



Buttons for a rally PSC rally

PARTNERS AND COLLABORATORS

The Energy Democracy Alliance is grateful to the following partners, who contributed to the formation of the Alliance and/or have participated on Alliance Working Groups or Task Forces:

Alliance for a Greater New York (ALIGN). Bronx Cooperative Development Initiative/Emerald Cities Collaborative New York City, Center for Working Families, Community Voices Heard, DE-Squared, Greater Syracuse Tenants Network, Green Education and Legal Fund, Northwest Bronx Community Clergy Coalition, Public Policy & Education Fund of New York, Public Utility Law Project, Solar One, The Solutions Project, Sustainable South Bronx, Voices of Community Activists and Leaders (VOCAL), and Vote Solar.

The Alliance has additionally engaged the following organizations to co-sign our letters and comments:

105 E 97th Street HDFC, Association for Energy Affordability, Buffalo Anti Racism Coalition, Buffalo Energy, Inc., Buffalo Local Initiatives Support Corporation, Buffalove Development, Building Bridges Initiative, Campaign for Renewable Energy, Capital Region 350 Climate Action, Center for Gender & Intercultural Studies Environmental Justice Committee – SUNY Cortland, Chhaya Community Development Corporation, City of Buffalo Delaware Council District, Clean Air Coalition of Western New York, Coalition for Sustainable Economic Development, Cody Creek Farm, Community Environmental Defense Council, Inc., Concerned Burlington Neighbors, Concerned Citizens of Otego, Concrete Green, Dryden Resource Awareness Coalition, EcoLogic Home, Eden Village Camp, Equity Energy LLC, ETM Solar Works, Food & Water Watch, Frack Action, Frank's Dr. Energy Saver, Friends of Hunter's Creek, GAR Associates, Gas Drilling Awareness for Cortland County, Gas Free Seneca, Get Your GreenBack Tompkins, Grassroots Environmental Education, Green Resource Hub of the Finger Lakes, Green Sanctuary, GreeningUSA, GroOperative, Inc., Gypsy Parlor, Helderberg Community Energy, LLC, Hughesco of Rochester, Local Initiatives Support Corp. - Buffalo, NY, Massachusetts Avenue project, MoveOn.org New York State Councils, Neighborhood Housing Services of Staten Island, New Buffalo Impact, New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG), NHS of Jamaica, Inc., Niagara/Rhode Island Block Club, North Fork Environmental Council, NY 4 Clean Energy, NYC Friends of Clearwater, One World Life Systems, Open Buffalo, Partnership for the Public Good, Pathstone Corporation, PAUSE (People of Albany United for Safe Energy), Peace Action of Central New York, People of Albany United for Safe Energy, Plymouth Friends of Clean Water, Pratt Center for Community Development, Prisoners Rights Coalition of Western New York, Ratepayer and Community Intervenors, R-CAUSE, Renewable Energy Task Force of the Western NY Peace Center, Inc., RUPCO, Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter, Sierra Club Niagara Group, Sloth Fingers' Custom Wire Creations, Social Ventures, Solar Liberty, Solutions Grassroots Project, Stone Quarry House, Stop the Algonquin Pipeline Expansion, Stop the Minisink Compressor Station, Sullivan Alliance for Sustainable Development, Sullivan Area Citizens for Responsible Energy Development, SUNY-ESF Sustainable Energy Club, Sustainable Hudson Valley, Sustainable McDonough, Sustainable Otsego, Sustainable Tompkins, Syracuse Peace Council, The Foundry, The Green Resource Hub of the Finger Lakes, The Partnership for Onondaga Creek, United for Action, University Mixing, Vestal Residents for Safe Energy (VeRSE), WE ACT for Environmental Justice, Western New York Council on Occupational Safety and Health, Western New York Environmental Alliance, Western New York Peace Center

FUNDING

The Energy Democracy Alliance has not to date had its own independent source of funding. Members of the coalition have contributed in-kind resources, staff time, and volunteer time. We are grateful to several foundations and organizations, which have funded the efforts of the Alliance through their funding of Energy Democracy Alliance member organizations. Our work has been supported by The Center for Social Inclusion's Kresge portfolio, PUSH and AGREE funds from Surdna Foundation, AGREE funds from the Park Foundation, and leadership grants provided to various Energy Democracy Alliance member organizations by the Solutions Project. We are currently seeking a fiscal sponsor and grant funding.

OUR PROGRAM

Energy Democracy Alliance campaigns have mainly targeted two powerful state agencies: The Public Service Commission and NYSEERDA. In the absence of action at the State Legislature, these two agencies, under the leadership of Governor Cuomo, are driving energy policy in New York. They also control billions of dollars of ratepayer funds and have the authority to make critical decisions regarding energy prices, utility rules, and clean energy programs.

As the Public Service Commission and NYSEERDA use their authority to remake utility regulations, re-envision the state's clean energy funds and programs, and generally overhaul the state's energy policy, the Energy Democracy Alliance's work has taken two main tracks: We have worked to change the decision-making process to incorporate the influence of marginalized communities, and we have worked to promote policy directions that will lead to energy democracy, equity, environmentalism, energy affordability, consumer protection, local ownership, and justice.

PROCESS MATTERS

The Public Service Commission traditionally makes decisions through a very formal administrative legal process that is unfamiliar and largely inaccessible to grassroots groups and the public at large. Conversely, NYSEERDA has little formal process for public input, but holds ad hoc "stakeholder" meetings to gather feedback on its activities. In the face of few opportunities to influence the extremely important decisions being made by these agencies, the Energy Democracy Alliance has used a variety of inside and outside tactics to try to force open space for underrepresented groups.

In October 2014, the Energy Democracy Alliance started what would become a series of letters to the Public Service Commission calling on the agency to slow its REV process down, provide longer comment periods, hold public hearings, provide better public information about REV, and improve avenues for input by groups most impacted by the policies being considered. These letters were signed by increasingly large numbers of groups, with the latest gaining 97 signatories from organizations, elected officials, and businesses across the state.

By January 2015, we had succeeded in pressuring the agency to hold eight public hearings across the state on its initial REV proposal. We worked to educate the public in communities hosting hearings and to drive turnout to the hearings. We conducted workshops, webinars, and information calls and distributed information through flyers, email, and social media. Though the public was given very short notice of the hearings, we organized hundreds to attend, in many cities filling the rooms with community members wanting to speak.

When the Commission issued its "REV Track One Order" just a couple of weeks later, they credited the outcry at the public hearings for their decision to commit to ongoing funding for large scale renewables in New York. They also credited public hearing statements with their increased attention to low-income customers within REV and their decision to deny ownership rights of renewable energy in most cases to utility companies.

In July 2015, the Energy Democracy Alliance also challenged the Public Service Commission's process around its Low-Income Affordability proceeding, which is a spin-off of REV focused specifically on designing utility discounts for low-income customers. When the Commission failed to include any low-income people or groups working in low-income communities in the development of its proposal, we organized 30 low-income New Yorkers to attend a "technical

Energy Democracy Working Group

Ratepayers Must be Engaged in the Energy Vision

REV may be the most significant regulatory proceeding in the PSC's history. Public participation is critical to ensure outcomes make sense and work for all New Yorkers.

We recommend the Commission take these actions to improve opportunities for individuals, communities and small businesses to participate in REV:

- Engage in an **aggressive publicity campaign** to inform the public about REV and encourage involvement.
- Develop a **dedicated website with plain language** information about REV proposals, schedule, comment forms, and instructions for party registration.
- Hold **public information sessions and public hearings** across the state to explain the proceeding, answer questions and take comments.
- **Slow down and simplify the process** so that the public has enough time to consider the implications of the policies and regulations at stake.
- Provide **intervener funds for community groups** to commission the research and staff necessary to participate fully in REV.
- Engage stakeholders in the design of a democratically controlled and professionally managed **Statewide Independent Distributed System Platform Provider (DSP)**, so the public can retain oversight and control over New York's energy future.



What is the Energy Democracy Working Group?

We are members of Alliance for a Green Economy, Binghamton Regional Sustainability Coalition, Catskill Mountainkeeper, Center for Social Inclusion, the Solutions Project, Syracuse United Neighbors, Pratt Center for Community Development and PUSH Buffalo.

We advocate for Energy Democracy, Environmental Sustainability, Energy Affordability, Consumer Protection, and Racial and Economic Justice through REV. For more information, contact jessica@agreeneconomy.org or visit www.allianceforagreenconomy.org/REV.

Our first flyer. Distributed at a REV technical conference



Members of PUSH Buffalo and allies gather outside a REV public hearing in January 2015.

conference” and assert their right to ask questions and discuss the policy. That event led to the Commission announcing public hearings across New York to gain feedback on its proposal. Again, the Alliance organized hundreds to attend the hearings and demand better policies.

The Public Service Commission also planned a second round of public hearings on REV for fall 2015, and then delayed those at our request to give community groups more time to get the word out.

As we will discuss below, the public pressure demonstrated at the public hearings has helped make progress on our process and policy agendas. Though we are still in the early phases of building power and advocating for our policy proposals, even the little bit of space in the process that we have pried open has made a difference.

As we move into 2016, we are having conversations with Department of Public Service staff, members of the Governor’s staff and others about how to deepen and improve the agency process for gathering input beyond public hearings. In addition to continuing to advocate for increased opportunities to participate in policy development, we are promoting institutional changes that will incorporate ratepayer and environmental representatives into the Commission rate cases and other critical decision points.

One of our main agenda items is to win intervenor funds for community groups to be able to hire their own lawyers and technical experts, so they can go toe to toe with utility companies when rates and energy investment plans are set in rate cases.

We are also advocating for a Community Choice Aggregation policy that would allow municipalities to wrest control of energy planning from utilities and make local investments in energy efficiency and renewables on their own terms.

POLICY AGENDA AND STRATEGY

“Make REV Renewable, Equitable, Accountable, and Local (R.E.A.L.)”

The Energy Democracy Alliance has prioritized several key policy demands in our work, and has looked for opportunities to push those demands through the various REV-related proceedings. In the lead up to the most recent round of public hearings on REV, we coined the slogan, “Make REV R.E.A.L” as a way to encapsulate our ambitious agenda under a unified banner. R.E.A.L. is an acronym that stands for Renewable, Equitable, Accountable, and Local.

The public hearings have provided key organizing opportunities to demonstrate public support for our agenda as well as showcase our organizing power. But organizing for public hearings is only one way we have promoted our policies. We have engaged in public education activities, including webinars, web and phone briefings, in-person workshops, and distribution of written materials in print and on our website. We have co-written and submitted detailed critical comments in our active PSC proceedings. We have issued press statements, held press conferences, and written op-eds. We have also solicited thousands of comments from the public at key moments, attended technical conferences and forums to distribute our flyers and ask pointed questions, and participated in meetings with Department of Public Service Staff, NYSERDA staff, and Governor Cuomo’s office.

Through this work, we have moved our agenda forward. Though we have a long way to go in achieving our vision, we have won some important clear victories and moved the needle toward future successes.



Photos from REV hearings in Syracuse (top left and center, photos: Andra Leimanis) and Long Island (top right, photo: Minister Erik McGregor), Press conference and workshop in Binghamton

AGGRESSIVE RENEWABLE ENERGY TARGETS AND SUBSIDIES

REV is being pursued primarily as a market-based reform effort meant to bring high levels of private capital into the clean energy space and replace the need for state subsidies. Within the REV proceeding, we have called for aggressive and enforceable renewable and efficiency targets and worked to defend state subsidies.

Our first success in this space came when the Commission announced a 10-year, \$1.5 billion commitment to subsidizing large scale renewable energy development in New York. The Commission specifically credited the large volume of testimony and comments supporting renewable energy for its decision.



Photo: Minister Erik McGregor

More recently, the Cuomo administration ordered the Commission to mandate that the utilities will have to buy ever increasing percentages of renewable energy in order to achieve a goal of 50% renewables by 2030. Many organizations across New York, including the Energy Democracy Alliance, have been calling for this kind of enforcement mechanism to ensure real progress toward renewable energy goals. The PSC will launch a proceeding in 2016 to achieve this mandate.

LOCAL AND SHARED OWNERSHIP OF RENEWABLES

The Energy Democracy Alliance is not only concerned with building renewable energy, but with how energy is owned and distributed in the state. Without attention to this detail, the clean energy economy could perpetuate and even exacerbate the economic inequality we see in the dirty energy system. Only by including renters, people without access to credit, households without disposable savings, and the unemployed or underemployed will we be able to achieve universal access to the benefits of clean energy and truly tackle climate change.

The Energy Democracy Alliance has advocated for various forms of local and shared ownership within REV from the outset and has been one of the leading voices resisting utility ownership and control over the clean energy system. Along with our allies, we were successful during REV Track 1 in preventing most forms of utility ownership of renewables.

Our largest accomplishment in this arena, however, came when we helped win a shared renewables (also called community net metering) policy in New York. This policy opens up participation and ownership in solar energy, wind and other renewables to renters and anyone who cannot or does not want to site renewables on their own property. The policy forces utilities to allow households and businesses to buy into or subscribe to a portion of a shared renewable energy project hosted elsewhere and receive the credits for that facility's output on their electricity bill.

As part of a larger Shared Renewable Energy Coalition (SHREC), which was led by Vote Solar, we helped build public pressure to win approval for shared renewables by the Public Service Commission. Members of the Energy Democracy Alliance were active within the SHREC, and we leveraged our large statewide list of organizational contacts to show widespread support for the policy. We also helped generate hundreds of public comments in favor of shared renewables. Of the more than 1,000 comments submitted in the case, more than half came through the Energy Democracy Alliance comment form hosted on the Alliance for a Green Economy website.

As a result of our advocacy within the SHREC coalition, the SHREC comments included strong demands for low-income goals and proposals. In its ruling on the shared renewable policy, the Public Service Commission responded to this work by fast-tracking projects that have at least 20% low-income participation for interconnection. The Commission also set up a collaborative on low-income participation in shared renewables – joined by utilities, environmentalists, state agencies,

and low-income advocates. This Collaborative is working together to further recommend policy that will enable and encourage low-income households to take advantage of solar and other renewables through community net metering.

In addition to participating heavily in the Public Service Commission's Collaborative, the Energy Democracy Alliance has created a statewide *Community Owned Shared Renewables (COSHARE) Task Force*. This group meets regularly to learn about successful models in other states and to facilitate the development of community owned shared renewables in New York. In March 2016, COSHARE will jointly hold a statewide Shared Solar Forum with the Central New York Regional Planning and Development Board. COSHARE is also developing an online toolbox and networking tool for community members to share resources and connect on developing shared renewables.

GETTING CLEAN ENERGY BENEFITS TO THOSE WHO NEED THEM MOST

As part of the REV process, NYSERDA has proposed a \$5 billion "Clean Energy Fund" to help support renewables and efficiency in New York over the next 10 years. The Clean Energy Fund will be paid for by surcharges on all utility bills, and it will be used to pay for a wide range of state energy programs, including rooftop and community solar subsidies, education programs, market development, research, and New York's Green Bank. The Public Service Commission has ultimate approval over the Clean Energy Fund.



Testimony at the NYSERDA Clean Energy Fund Forum

The Energy Democracy Alliance supports the existence of a Clean Energy Fund as necessary in the face of catastrophic climate change and supports the use of ratepayer and public money to move New York on an aggressive path to carbon-emissions reductions. But we go further, with a conviction that the New York's Clean Energy Funding mechanisms must be progressive and just.

As it stands, low-income New Yorkers pay a higher portion of their income into ratepayer-funded clean energy programs, because they spend a disproportionate percentage of their income on energy. At the same time, these New Yorkers face higher barriers when it comes to accessing the benefits of those programs: the financial savings of energy efficiency retrofits, the return on investment in rooftop solar, and the jobs created in clean energy industries. These barriers are also pronounced for people of color, who face additional discrimination and as a result have less access to credit, home ownership, and the resources needed to adopt energy saving and energy producing technologies.

The Energy Democracy Alliance advocates for equity in the Clean Energy Fund. Our platform includes calling for:

- A carve-out of 40% of the fund for subsidies and programs targeted toward low and moderate income households and communities of color.
- The development of a Race and Economic Equity Metric (REEM) and Asset Mapping tool (adapted from California's EnviroScreen) to guide clean energy investment and track progress.
- The inclusion of wage and hiring standards for any project receiving public or ratepayer funds.
- Support for community-based organizations embedded in low-income communities and communities of color as program developers and administrators.

In February 2015, the Energy Democracy Alliance convened a meetings of 14 organizations to learn about and strategize around NYSERDA's Clean Energy Fund proposal. The next day, 20 of us attended NYSERDA's forum on the Clean Energy

Fund and distributed flyers outlining our demands to everyone attending. We also flooded the question and answer portions of the meeting to ask pointed questions and make comments.

The Energy Democracy Alliance also created a *Clean Energy Fund Task-Force* that submitted extensive collective comments on the Clean Energy Fund.

On January 21, 2016, the Public Service Commission approved the creation of a Clean Energy Fund, but will require NYSERDA to submit much more detail on how funds will be spent and tracked. Additionally, the Commission carved out 30% of NYSERDA's largest funding portfolio for low and moderate income programs.

The Energy Democracy Alliance will continue to pressure NYSERDA throughout 2016 to increase funding for low- and moderate-income households and communities and people of color, fund the REEM and Asset Mapping tools, and to work more collaboratively with organizations on the ground in low-income communities and communities of color.

PROGRESSIVE RATES - ENERGY AFFORDABILITY

In 2014, more than 270,000 families had their utility service shut off because they couldn't pay their bills. As part of the REV process, the Public Service Commission is re-examining the low-income discount programs that utilities run in New York. The Public Service Commission said its "Energy Affordability for Low-Income Utility Customers" proceeding is a response to the high numbers of shut-offs as well as concerns raised about the impact of REV on low-income people.

The proceeding began with no input on the policy proposal from low-income people or even groups working with low-income populations. As a result, the proposal to improve low-income discounts for energy bills is stingy and leaves out the majority of low-income people in the state. In response, the Energy Democracy Alliance has been organizing public pressure to improve the proposal.

Our demands include:

- Create a discount program that is open to all low-income New Yorkers and has enough funding to bring energy burdens in line with a 6% of household income threshold;
- Address some of the root causes of the crisis by devoting more resources to energy efficiency and providing increased access to low-cost solar energy;
- Create an Interagency Task Force on Energy Affordability to grapple with some of the more complex issues, including the problem of landlords not investing in energy efficiency;
- Track utility shutoffs by census block in order to root out racial discrimination by utility companies.



Testimony and press conferences in Syracuse, Buffalo, and Poughkeepsie in which low-income people and advocates called for energy affordability and progressive rates in NY.

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- Fund the low-income discount program through progressive rates, such that large businesses pay their fair share toward the program.

We started by bringing approximately 30 low-income people to the Public Service Commission “technical conference” to discuss the proposal. Though the group was not politely received, participants politely but insistently asserted their right to participate in the proceeding and to bring their expertise as low-income people to the discussion. The group also asked questions about the process and demanded public hearings. After the technical conference, we visited with Public Service Commissioner Diane Burman and reiterated the issues.

In response to this event, the Public Service Commission announced public hearings on the proposal. We then organized press conferences and turnout for the hearings to keep the public pressure on the Commission. In Buffalo, the City Council passed a resolution supporting many of our key demands. Next, several representatives of the Energy Democracy Alliance held a meeting with staff from the Governor’s office to alert the administration deficiencies in the current proposal. We also submitted detailed jointly written comments into the docket for the proceeding.

We are anticipating a decision from the Commission on the proposal in the first quarter of 2016. Until the ruling, we will continue to keep up the public pressure through media, public comments, and meetings with policy-makers.

LOOKING AHEAD

As we enter 2016, the Energy Democracy Alliance is working to consolidate and build on initial successes, recruit additional members and partners, build our network and our power, and continue to fight for collective goals within the REV and related proceedings.

We are kicking off 2016 with an Energy Democracy Symposium to showcase the on-the-ground community energy work being done across New York and to frame our struggle in a national and international context. The Symposium will be followed by several more convenings and organizing events held throughout the year across the state, focused on a variety of topics. In addition to building a public understanding of energy democracy and building our organization through these statewide meetings, we will continue to organize public pressure campaigns to win our policy demands, utilizing the diversity of strengths and organizing methods that our members.



www.energydemocracyny.org