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Another Voice: Rural New Yorkers again at the mercy of Albany bureaucrats

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By Jeff Dewart, Wright Ellis and Jim Simon

If there ever was a governor more committed to the old axiom, “If at first you don’t succeed, try, try again,” it’s Andrew Cuomo.

In his efforts for New York to become the greenest state in the nation, the governor secretly devised a plan to circumvent two potentially pesky obstacles – the state constitution and local governments.

Due to a new fast-tracked law called Section 94c, local governments in upstate and rural New York are now at the mercy of a new state agency, controlled by the governor, to decide which industrial wind and solar projects will be sited in their municipalities. Local laws to protect public health, environment, property values, recreation and tourism, etc., are swept aside in favor of the governor’s agenda.

The New York Department of State is now charged with establishing zoning and siting standards for industrial wind and solar over the course of four public hearings in the next several months. A recent state action speaks volumes for what a sham this process will be.

On April 1, a letter went out from state agencies, not to the towns who will bear the brunt of these ill-conceived projects, but to “Members of the Clean Energy Industry.” It was meant to “convey a message of support and compassion during these challenging times” and stated that “we are committed to doing everything in our collective power

and authority to provide you with assistance and relief in the weeks and months ahead.”

Lastly, the letter pledged to “aid you and your critical industries in the months ahead.”

What makes this letter so outrageous are the state agencies that signed it: NYS Energy Research and Development Authority, Department of Environmental Conservation, New York Power Authority and the Public Service Commission.

The very agencies that will be consulting with the CEO of the new Office of Renewable Energy Siting on a plan for greenhouse gas emissions reduction have already pledged their “common commitment” to a single “solution”: large-scale wind and solar projects. Local governments and residents will be presenting to a judge and jury with a predetermined verdict.

Concern shown to the industrial renewable energy industry – a consortium of soul-less corporations driven by the profit motive – is especially appalling during a pandemic when people are struggling to keep their homes and feed their families.

So much for home rule. If you ever had any doubts about what constitutes a rigged system, those doubts can now be erased compliments of Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo.

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