



A.1122 (DESTITO ET. AL) S.1599-A (VALESKY, ET AL.)

Summary

This bill would amend New York State Public Service Law and State Finance Law to require any party filing an application to build a major electric transmission line to pay certain fees based on the size of the project. The monies generated from such filing would be deposited into a state account that could be accessed by municipalities, nonprofit organizations, or relevant community groups to defray the costs of participating in the siting proceeding. These funds could not be used to cover legal fees in the event a party chooses to challenge the Public Service Commission's (PSC) final decision on issuing a permit for a major transmission line.

Explanation

The process of siting major electric utility transmission lines is complex; and to meaningfully and effectively participate in such a process requires a sophisticated understanding of science, engineering, regulations and laws. Current law pertaining to PSC transmission siting proceedings does include provisions that allow for public participation and input. However, due to the level of expertise necessary to properly analyze these project proposals, municipalities and community groups often find it difficult to weigh-in effectively.

This bill provides for increased community involvement in the siting process and would establish an applicant-financed intervenor fund. These funds could be used by active parties in the certification proceedings to hire the experts—such as attorneys, engineers, and environmental consultants—who will enable communities to make well-informed decisions and ensure their voices are heard during the application review process and comment period.

Transmission line projects may be necessary in coming years to ensure reliable power delivery across the state, particularly from clean, renewable sources such as wind farms. However, such projects can span long distances and significantly impact the environment—fragmenting habitat, increasing erosion, and degrading water quality, as well as presenting hazards to wildlife. Creating an applicant-funded intervenor account will enable local groups to ensure such projects are sited in the most environmentally responsible way possible.

Environmental Advocates of New York supports this bill.

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