



A.8489 (PEOPLES, ROSENTHAL)

Summary

This bill would require New York State's Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to issue biennial reports listing high local environmental impact zones across the state. Such zones can be defined as areas that are adversely affected by existing environmental hazards. The list would be compiled by collecting the best information available through a number of state and federal environmental databases—at the census tract, census block group, or nine-digit zip code level—in one concise report.

Explanation

The siting of projects with potential adverse environmental impacts is a complex and difficult process. Unfortunately, geographic areas with existing environmental hazards are often selected as the site for new projects.

This bill provides an important tool that New York could use to address problems of environmental injustice by documenting the areas across the state that already host significant environmental hazards. Polluting facilities are often sited in minority and low-income communities. By summarizing the existing pollution loads within certain areas and then identifying the top five percent of the high environmental impact zones, a higher level of attention will be brought to the issue of inequity in siting environmentally harmful facilities.

The biennial list will serve as an important tool in combating the construction of additional polluting and hazardous facilities in areas that already bear more than their fair share of the burden. Additionally, critical information about potential hazards would be more available to the general public, allowing New Yorkers to better educate themselves about environmental and health hazards that exist in their communities.

Environmental Advocates of New York supports this bill.

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