Environmental Advocates NY Responds to Governor Cuomo’s Executive Budget Proposal

Testimony presented to the Joint Legislative Budget Committee is available here.

Clean Water Infrastructure
The executive budget includes a new $500 million for the Clean Water Infrastructure Act, the third installment of the Governor’s promise to invest an additional $2.5 billion in the CWIA. As has been the case for the past several years, there are no line-item appropriations for the various program categories funded by the CWIA. The program categories, including the Lead Service Line Replacement Program, remained the same.

“We applaud Governor Cuomo for proposing new investments to fix our pipes in the state budget,” said Rob Hayes, Director of Clean Water. “The $500 million in new funding for the Clean Water Infrastructure Act is exactly the economic boost that struggling communities need right now. Repairing our aging and crumbling water infrastructure will both protect drinking water and put thousands of New Yorkers safely back to work in good-paying jobs. The sooner we can get that money out the door, the sooner New York can build back better from the COVID-19 crisis.”

Climate
The executive budget proposal transfers $23 million of funds from the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) to the state’s General Fund. The proposal also continues tax breaks for combustible fuels and related industries.

“In order to conform with New York’s climate law, we need to stop burning things to power our State,” said Conor Bambrick, Director of Climate Policy. “Unfortunately, the Governor’s budget proposal extends tax exemptions for polluting combustible fuels. If we are to move forward as a state, we cannot continue giving these fuels a leg up.

The climate law also requires equitable spending when it comes to clean energy funding sources like RGGI. It is critical that RGGI funds, especially those dedicated to disadvantaged communities, stop being used to plug budget holes.”
**Environmental Protection Fund**
The executive budget proposal maintains $300 million of funding for the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF).

Kate Kurera, Deputy Director said, “The Governor’s budget proposal again makes a welcome and needed investment in the Environmental Protection Fund. We look forward to seeing these allocations swiftly fund projects that bring immense environmental and economic benefits to New York.”

**Environmental Bond Act**
This year’s executive budget proposal excluded an Environmental Bond Act. A $3 Billion bond act was passed as part of last year’s budget but was removed from the ballot by the Governor.

Kate Kurera, Deputy Director said, “Not moving forward with an environmental bond act this year would be another missed opportunity to put New Yorkers back to work, stimulate our economy, and, of course, improve our water quality, increase climate resiliency, as well as bring critical investments to environmental justice communities. While not in the current proposal, we were encouraged to hear the Executive remains committed to the idea and plans on discussing it with the Legislature.”

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