

## 2013 Update from the New York State Assembly

# ENERGY COMMITTEE

Sheldon Silver, Speaker • Amy Paulin, Chair

### Message from the Chair



Dear Friend,

I am pleased to share with you the accomplishments and initiatives of the Assembly Committee on Energy during the 2013 legislative session. This newsletter will detail legislation which the Committee reported and issues the Committee is currently working on, as well as provide some tips on reducing energy costs.

The Committee advanced several key bills that passed the Assembly, some of which also passed the Senate and have been signed into law by the Governor. Some of the key issues addressed during this session were protecting utility customers and encouraging and facilitating the use of renewable energy, especially solar.

I learned a great deal about energy policy during my first year as Chair of the Energy Committee. My work to expand that knowledge didn't stop with the end of the 2013 session. Last month, I attended an energy workshop in the state of Washington, joining legislators from around the country, to learn about new developments in the energy field and how other states are handling their energy challenges.

In addition, I toured Indian Point and I am scheduled to tour Covanta's Dutchess County Energy-from-Waste facility in the coming weeks.

Please take time to review some of the tips we have included about how to make your home more energy efficient. The heat this summer created record demand on the electric grid and the winter, with its own unique energy challenges, will be here before you know it. I've included some tips on how to prepare your home for the change of seasons so you can save money on your heating bills.

I look forward to sharing more updates with you in the coming months as the Committee holds hearings and works on new legislation to benefit New Yorkers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amy Paulin". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Amy R. Paulin  
Chair, Committee on Energy

# Legislative highlights



## The “NY-Sun Act of 2013”

One of the Committee’s top priorities is to increase the availability of solar power and to make solar installation more affordable for New Yorkers. Assemblyman Englebright, who has spearheaded this effort, introduced A.5060-C, which would extend the NY-Sun Initiative for 10 years. The NY-Sun program aims to dramatically increase statewide deployment of solar energy through incentives targeted to residential and non-residential customers. Extending the program would:

- Install 2,200 megawatts of solar by 2023, which could provide power to approximately 400,000 homes.
- Provide business certainty to the solar industry, encouraging solar developers and contractors to invest in New York-based projects and create jobs within the state.
- Reduce strain on New York’s electric grid during the hottest days of the year, thus reducing the need for utilities to purchase power from the most expensive power plants, which are fired up only when needed to meet demand.

While there are some discrepancies between the Assembly’s version of the bill (which has already passed) and the Senate’s version (S.2522 sponsored by Senator Maziarz), the Committee intends to work on resolving those differences in the upcoming session.

## Increasing the cap on net metering customers

Net metering pertains to customers who have small-scale renewable energy production facilities, such as a wind turbine or solar panels, on their property. These customers use special “net meters” that measure electric usage as well as electricity produced from a renewable device. Customers are credited for the amount of electricity produced on their monthly electric bill. If the customer uses more electricity than he or she receives credits for, he or she pays the utility for the additional electricity he or she has used from the grid. If a customer receives credits in excess of the electricity he or she has used, the customer can receive payment for the excess credits at the end of the year.

The Committee advocated for an increase in the number of utility customers able to participate in net metering, which had been limited to 1% of system peak load. On June 13, 2013, the Public Service Commission announced its decision to increase the maximum number of customers eligible to participate to 3% of the system peak load. This means that more people will be able to connect renewable energy systems to the grid, cutting down their use of traditional electricity while supplying more green power to the grid.

## New legislative initiatives

### Shared renewables

The majority of electric customers cannot install renewable energy systems, such as solar panels, due to physical limitations on their property or because they are renters. The Committee is working with several advocacy groups to craft legislation to address this problem. This legislation would enable customers to share in a renewable energy facility and receive benefits on their utility bill, similar to the benefits net metering customers receive.

This will open a new renewable energy market in New York and attract more investment to the State in addition to helping current consumers. More clean energy will be produced in the state and fed onto the electric grid thus decreasing the need for emissions-producing power plants.

### Municipal energy aggregation

Municipal energy aggregation is another issue on which the Committee is working. A municipal energy aggregation program allows a municipality or group of municipalities to pool together a large number of residents and solicit bids from energy services companies to supply their electricity and gas. The municipality can then obtain the best price for residents, saving them money on utility bills. The Committee developed a bill, A.7896-A (Paulin), to create a pilot program for municipalities in Westchester County to set up these programs. This would be the first time such a program, which is already in use throughout the country, would be employed in New York.

# 5 ways to increase energy efficiency in your home

## 1. Use an Energy STAR-qualified cable box.

In standby mode, a digital cable box with a DVR consumes more energy than a TV, multifunction printer and laptop when turned off but still plugged in. Energy STAR-qualified boxes are on average 45% more efficient than conventional models.

## 2. Replace incandescent light bulbs with compact fluorescent bulbs.

Over its lifetime, each compact fluorescent (CFL) bulb will save you \$5 in energy costs. CFLs last longer and can save 75% more energy compared to incandescent bulbs.

## 3. Seal your windows and doors.

Use caulk and weather strips around windows and doors that leak air. Replacing windows with Energy STAR windows can save you \$20-95 each year in energy costs.

## 4. Set your water heater thermostat at 120 degrees or lower.

The U.S. Dept. of Energy estimates that the average household spends 12% of its energy bill running a water heater. Lowering your thermostat can save you \$36-61 annually. Consider switching to a tankless water heater to save 30% of energy use. Tankless water heaters waste less energy because they heat water as it's being used instead of keeping a whole tank hot.

## 5. Wash clothes in cold water.

Most of the energy consumed by washing machines goes to heating water, not by moving parts. Since there is no minimum temperature for optimal clothing cleaning, washing in cold water can save an average household \$30-40 annually in energy costs.



These facts were adapted from the Energy Conservation Quiz and Energy STAR, which can be found at <http://environment.nationalgeographic.com/environment/green-guide/quizzes/energy-conservation/> and [energystar.gov](http://energystar.gov), respectively.



Assemblywoman Amy Paulin participated in the Legislative Energy Horizon Institute's Energy School in Richland, Washington in early July 2013. It was an intensive five-day program for state legislators that covered a wide range of topics and included lectures and fieldwork.

# Save on your energy bills through Home Performance with Energy STAR



Home Performance with Energy STAR offers benefits and incentives to help make energy efficiency improvements affordable for New York State homeowners. Energy STAR products are independently certified to save energy without sacrificing features or functionality. The Energy STAR program helps homeowners improve comfort and indoor air quality while reducing energy bills.



**FOR MORE INFORMATION** and **HOW IT WORKS** see the bottom of the page...

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### How it works:

- Start with a free or reduced-cost comprehensive home energy assessment from a participating contractor and learn exactly how your home is wasting energy and money.
- Work with a Building Performance Institute accredited Home Performance participating contractor to choose the best energy efficiency upgrades for your needs and budget.
- Qualify for a 10% cash back incentive and low-interest financing that help you save on the cost of energy upgrades, then pay for them without stretching your budget. Low- to moderate-income households may qualify for grants of up to \$5,000 to pay half the cost of their energy upgrade projects.

For more information, visit <http://stars.nyserdagreeny.org/>

Hudson Valley residents and businesses can also contact the Energy Improvement Corporation for information about Energize NY programs to facilitate and finance energy efficiency projects in participating municipalities.

Visit [energizeny.org](http://energizeny.org) or call (914) 302-7300 to learn more.