

Dear New York State Legislature,

I'm writing to submit testimony and comments for the Local Government portion of the New York State Joint Legislative Budget Hearing. I'm writing on behalf of Protect Columbia, a grassroots organization that is based in the Town of Columbia, Herkimer County, NY.

Many of the new laws and processes that have been enacted over the past few years pertaining to the streamlining of the siting process of large-scale renewable energy projects, such as solar and wind energy, have seriously harmed towns across the state – by taking viable farmland out of production, degrading ecosystems, eroding quality of life within upstate communities, amongst many other concerns. Proposed changes to Real Property Tax Law 487 and Section 575-b as amended in Part N of the Executive Budget on Revenue (page 70) would add to these harms without providing any tangible benefits for the state.

The solar and wind energy system appraisal model or models and discount rates that New York State is currently using and looking to continue greatly discounts the taxable value of large-scale solar and wind projects. This discounted tax assessment model takes additional tax revenues out of local budgets, and puts local municipalities at a disadvantage by depriving them of tax revenues that they deserve.

The budget proposal would make the Office of Real Property Tax Services' (ORPTS) the only entity that will have a voice and say in how large-scale renewable energy projects will be assessed, as it takes away the ability for local authority to value real property. This appears to be an egregious attempt at government overreach, and only furthers the point of view that the decks are stacked against towns across the state, when it comes to the large-scale renewable energy apparatus.

We, along with many other towns and citizen groups across the state share these views regarding the state's unacceptable disregard of local authority, ask and urge that you eliminate and reject these and any other provisions to any proposed state budgets that uses the Real Property Tax Laws and its related appraisal models or discount rates to bypass local government.

Thank you for your consideration.

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