

GAS MORATORIUM CONFLICT — POLITICO's Danielle Muoio and Marie J. French

- 2019 08 23 - Downstate gas moratoriums have placed some environmentally conscious politicians in a rhetorical bind: how do you push for less reliance on natural gas while demanding utilities expand gas service in the short term? National Grid has said it will not approve requests for new or upgraded gas service in its territory in New York City and Long Island until the state approves the \$1 billion natural gas pipeline, arguing there is a lack of adequate gas supply until the line is built. The move has roiled developers and business owners who say their inability to get gas has threatened projects and jeopardized their operations. Amid mounting outcry, elected leaders who have opposed the pipeline are now calling on National Grid to approve new gas hookups. Some have even raised concerns with more environmentally-friendly alternatives such as electrification, stating in a recent letter that it would "put further strain on the ConEd grid, which has already experienced multiple major blackouts." (link in title works for politico pro subscribers)

... The situation laid bare a conflict wherein local officials who oppose the Williams pipeline and vote in favor of policies to reduce natural gas reliance are blaming the utility for not installing more gas hookups. "National Grid must find a way to provide alternative service to Brooklyn, Queens, and Long Island," reads a July letter co-signed by 17 New York City Council Members, many of whom oppose the pipeline. "We urge you to reconsider your current refusal to issue new hook-ups, and to begin immediately installing gas lines in the homes of those who need them." The officials say their positions aren't at odds. They argue that National Grid is holding customers hostage as a political bargaining chip to get state approval for an unneeded pipeline, accusing the utility of manufacturing a gas shortage that doesn't exist.