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**Public Service Commission moves forward on energy efficiency while burdening  
Con Ed ratepayers with investments in fossil fuel pipelines and underfunding  
renewable heating**

Albany, NY — Renewable energy and energy efficiency supporters packed today's monthly Public Service Commission meeting to hear decisions on New York's long-awaited Energy Efficiency Standard as well as the controversial Consolidated Edison rate case settlement.

To the disappointment of activists gathered in the room, the Commissioners, who are all appointed by Governor Cuomo, approved Consolidated Edison's rate hike request, which included hundreds of millions of dollars for gas infrastructure projects the company said were needed to increase gas delivery in its New York City territory. Environmental advocacy groups nearly unanimously opposed Con Edison's gas proposal because of these investments, which fly in the face of climate science and New York's climate law. Only Commissioner Tracey Edwards voted no on the proposal, saying that she wanted the Commission to move faster on environmental issues. The vote to approve the rate hike was met by chants and songs of resistance by some of the activists in the room, who temporarily shut down the meeting and were eventually removed by security.

Westchester County legislator, Colin Smith, later expressed his disappointment in the decision saying that the rate hike increased the financial burden on already struggling Westchester families. He praised Governor Cuomo for his efforts to stand up to the corporate utilities like Con Edison and went on to say: "We are here today to call on our state agencies, like the Public Service Commission, to stop fueling our economy with these antiquated fossil fuel based systems that continue to cost constituents millions in ratepayer dollars. We are calling for more aggressive action that will ensure a safe and healthy future for not only the people of Westchester but throughout the State of New York."

The Commission also approved an energy efficiency plan which has been delayed for months. Over a year ago, the Commission ordered an acceleration of energy efficiency, but then faltered on issuing an implementation order after utilities pushed back on targets and budgets and failed to adequately respond to recommendations from environmental justice, climate justice, and energy democracy advocates. As months dragged on without sufficient funding for energy efficiency or renewable heating options, utility companies in New York City imposed moratoria due to increases in demand for fracked gas. Activists from Renewable Heat Now have attended the last five Public Service Commission meetings to protest the lack of movement on energy efficiency and to call on the Commission to urgently fund heat pumps as alternatives to gas heating. Over 1,000 people submitted comments in favor of strong heat pump targets and incentives and over 90 organizations signed onto a letter making specific recommendations about how to transition from gas to efficiency and heat pumps.

The energy efficiency order was a mixed bag. On the plus side, the order approved nearly \$400 million more for utility efficiency programs than it had originally allocated in December of 2018. On the flip side, the Commission reduced its previous heat pump target of 5 TBtu by 2025 to 3.6 TBtu. The Commission's Order will amount to approximately 12,000 households per year converting from fossil fuels to heat pumps. Experts have estimated that the state needs to convert over 200,000 buildings per year to heat pumps to meet its climate goals. Popular suggestions such as a "Cash for Clunkers" replacement program for inefficient furnaces and boilers were rejected.

"Overall, we are glad the Energy Efficiency Order is finally published so that implementation can get underway," said Irene Weiser of Fossil Free Tompkins. "This order sends a message that heat pumps and not fossil fuels are the future for building heating and cooling. I am encouraged that the state intends more oversight to ensure the utilities achieve the heat pump and efficiency targets that have been set, but I am disappointed that the Commission did not do more to push the utilities out of their comfort zone by setting more ambitious targets."

"We needed game changing policy in this Energy Efficiency Order and a commitment for utility scale conversions to heat pumps," said Kim Fraczek, director of Sane Energy Project. "Instead the Commission backslid on its already underwhelming goals. This is not climate leadership. This is business as usual for utilities, who make generous profits from fracked gas infrastructure investments."

"Our climate future depends on the actions we take today. This Energy Efficiency Order is an important step for renewable heating, funding a pathway to switch from dirty fossil fuel heat to comfortable homes that are inexpensive to heat and cool," said Lindsay Speer with Alliance for a Green Economy. "In Central New York, families are cutting their heating costs by up to 75% with heat pumps. But New Yorkers need more assistance to be able to switch to these clean heating and cooling technologies. Governor Cuomo and the Public Service Commission need to go all in on funding for renewable heat and they need to stop funding gas infrastructure expansion."

"According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the most critical time to take action is in the next 10-year period," said Charlie Olver of the New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG). "New York is at a critical juncture and we must stop fossil fuel infrastructure expansion now. The solution is simple: New York must ramp up energy efficiency, renewable heat, and begin requiring electrification of new buildings. Today's energy efficiency order is not aggressive enough to meet these goals. As a young adult, I'm counting on New York's leadership."

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