

Environment & Energy

New York Governor Vetoes Utility Reporting, Environmental Bills

By Zach Bright

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- State budget won't pay for the bills, Hochul said
 - Environmental groups say data transparency needed
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New York Gov. Kathy Hochul nixed a handful of environmental measures, including one to require increased public utilities reporting, pointing to high costs and a settled state budget.

The public utilities reporting bill, S5451-C, would have required services for water, gas, and electric to disclose ratepayer data to the state Department of Public Service.

Hochul (D) didn't express opposition to the bill's substance in a Nov. 23 veto message. Grouping S5451-C with 38 other measures on her desk, Hochul said they would create "unnecessary bureaucracy" and in total cost about \$40 million that isn't available in the state financial plan.

Proponents urged Hochul to include the measure in the state's next budget, saying the measure is crucial to pinpoint where water is least affordable and accessible.

"The Governor's veto will leave New York woefully behind other states like New Jersey that have taken strides to address this issue, and will keep many economically struggling New Yorkers hidden from view," said Rob Hayes, clean water director for Environmental Advocates NY.

New Jersey in September passed a law similar to New York's requiring all water, sewer, electric, and gas utilities to submit numbers on customer bills, shutoffs, late fees, tax liens, and other affordability metrics. Such laws in other states, including Illinois and California, only apply to investor-owned utilities.

Hochul vetoed other environmental and energy measures with the same reasoning.

One would have made New York by 2032 reduce, reuse, recycle, or compost at least 85% of solid waste generated. Two others would have directed the state's energy agency to produce reports on replacing dormant power plants with renewable energy and establishing microgrids.

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