

Cultivating Our Economy with Vision



By Joseph Kelleher

You can't run a business without energy, and given the cost of doing business in New York, you shouldn't run a business without energy efficiencies.

Much in the same light, you can't run an entire state economy without addressing employers' most pressing needs: electricity supply, cost and how it will be delivered to where the jobs are and will be a decade from now.

It was about a decade ago that a group of investors came to a perfectly located part of the Bronx and envisioned building a suburban-styled office campus to bring jobs and economic opportunities, as few had done in recent years.

Ten years later, their vision has given rise to over 1 million square feet of office space hosting a college, medical and high tech facilities and dozens of companies producing the jobs our local economy needs. And they are not done yet.

This is the type of economic creativity that any community desires, but to reliably supply energy needs to operate computers for 1,200 college students or critical life saving medical equipment requires years of strategic planning and budgeting. When you are responsible for making sure the lights go on and stay on in an office complex to meet the needs of every company, employee and student, you think ahead about being prepared.

For landlords and businesses that depend on abundant and affordable electricity to keep our doors open, we are concerned about dwindling supply, growing costs, lack of planning, distribution constraints, overregulation and excess taxation being layered on already burdensome utility bills.

When companies research where to locate, all of these factors are considered. Yet many leaders consider powering New York is as easy as just flipping the light switch. That's wrong.

Like those Bronx visionaries a decade ago who created something from nothing, New York State leaders need to plan where the power will come from 10-20 years from now and determine if the pieces to make it happen are in place now.

Joe Kelleher is the President of the Hutchinson Metro Center a 42-acre suburban office campus in the heart of the Bronx that will soon house almost 2 million square feet of Class A space. Mr. Kelleher is also Chairman of the Bronx Chamber of Commerce which advocates for more than 600 businesses and 45,000 jobs in the borough.

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The New York Affordable Reliable Electricity Alliance (New York AREA) is a diverse group of business, labor, environmental, and community leaders working together for clean, low-cost and reliable electricity solutions that foster prosperity and jobs for the Empire State.

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Focus on Job Creation in 2010



By Bob Seeger

If you think New York's 9.4 percent unemployment average is bad, just look at the 30-50 percent average unemployment in certain corners of the building and construction trade unions statewide to see real economic pain.

Unemployment among the construction trades is at staggering levels and taking a major toll on the highly skilled men and women who build and maintain the buildings we live and work in and the infrastructure and roads in our communities. Add to that the thousands more finishing jobs that soon face a very uncertain future.

Trade-sector unions such as the Millwrights are tirelessly fighting to utilize our skills and experience for the public good, and to offer our members the opportunity to earn an honest days' wage. Yet, across the State each and every project faces significant state regulatory roadblocks or runaway NIMBYism.

Thousand of us are on hold waiting to work on significant and needed infrastructure projects, such as the expansion of the Hempstead Resource Recovery Facility, as well as construction of new power generation plants in Dover and Wawayanda. These multi-year projects will create thousands of construction and hundreds of long term jobs for New York.

We are also facing an influx of unskilled, out-of-state workers for these projects – some of the many reasons why Industrial Development Authority funds should go to local contractors that hire local workers. This will pump dollars back into local businesses and economies.

In the energy industry, the lack of a power plant siting law has made a precarious situation even worse. And certain elected officials are still focused on closing Indian Point; a destructive action which would devastate the union workforce and their families already burdened with excessive utility rates and high energy taxes.

Now is not the time for red tape, blind ideology or other roadblocks. Speaking on behalf of the 30-50 percent in the building trades who need jobs to pay our property taxes and feed our kids, we can no longer keep waiting on the sideline while economic opportunities bypass New York. Jobs are the type of stimulus we need in 2010.

Bob Seeger is an Advisory Board member of the New York Affordable Reliable Electricity Alliance.

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New York AREA's membership includes some of the state's most vital business, labor and community organizations including the New York State AFL-CIO, Business Council of New York State, Partnership for New York City, New York Building Congress, National Federation of Independent Business and many more.

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