

THE NY RENEWS GRASSROOTS TOOLKIT



NY RENEWS

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INTRODUCTION

NY Renews is a statewide coalition of more than 80 organizations fighting for a just and equitable transition to 100% clean, renewable energy. We're made up of community groups, labor unions and environmental and climate justice organizations, as well as faith-based organizations, sustainable businesses, and other advocates. We're joining together to fight for policies that will preserve our state and our planet, and to support economic and racial justice, especially for communities and working people most affected by the impacts of a changing climate.

To create the New York we want, it's going to take action from individuals and communities across the state. Want to help us transform New York? This toolkit contains everything you'll need, no matter what your level of experience or where you live. It tells you how to carry out two important actions that are needed now: (1) how to meet with your state elected officials and (2) how to reach out to new organizations and constituencies to get them involved.

Thanks for your work, and welcome aboard!



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Here is some basic information and a few resources to help you be the best advocate possible.

First, why is NY Renews running this campaign?

NY Renews was convened based on nine points of unity that motivate and inform everything we do:

1. We seek a sustainable future for the earth and its people.
2. We recognize climate change represents a serious threat to all and especially to vulnerable people.
3. We understand that unchecked corporate power jeopardizes a sustainable future.
4. We can address both the climate crisis and the inequality crisis with the same set of policies.
5. We support rapid movement toward 100% clean, renewable energy.
6. Climate protection must serve as a means to greater economic justice and stronger local economies.
7. Climate protection must serve as a means to challenge environmental and racial injustice.
8. We must ensure economic security and job placement programs for existing workers and young people.
9. We must ensure community participation and oversight in decision making.

Second, what is NY Renews trying to accomplish?

NY Renews wants to pass landmark climate legislation that will compel a just transition to 100% clean, renewable energy, with real support for vulnerable communities and protections for workers. To accomplish this, we've developed a Legislative Platform that outlines four policies we want signed into law.

[Take a few minutes to review the full Legislative Platform here.](http://bit.ly/2cegcwZ) [http://bit.ly/2cegcwZ]

During the 2016 NY State Legislative session, we supported a bill – the New York State Climate and Community Protection Act (CCPA) – that reflects the first two planks of this platform. It was passed in the Assembly and gathered strong, bipartisan support in the Senate. Over the coming year, we're going to continue to push to pass the CCPA, while fleshing out legislation that reflects the remaining pieces of the platform.

Third, so what exactly does the New York State Climate and Community Protection Act say?

Here's the boiled down version – the CCPA:

- Makes our state climate and pollution reduction commitments legally binding, setting a path to 100% clean, renewable energy by 2050;
- Creates a process to ensure that resources are equitably allocated towards vulnerable, impacted, historically disadvantaged, and frontline communities;
- Requires all of state government to evaluate the climate and equity impacts of their decisions and ensure that they are helping us achieve our mandates;
- Ensures that our climate efforts create clean, renewable energy jobs with binding fair labor standards and career advancement opportunities; and
- Ensures government accountability and action.

[You can read the full text of the 2016 Climate and Community Protection Act that passed the Assembly here.](http://bit.ly/2c5mAC9) [http://bit.ly/2c5mAC9]

Want this to be the law of the land in the Empire State? Here are some key tactics to make it happen...

TACTIC 1: MEET WITH YOUR STATE ELECTED OFFICIALS

State Senators and Assembly Members are central to changing policy in New York. One of the most crucial things you can do is to meet with your elected officials, let them know that the goals of NY Renews have broad and diverse support in their district, and ask them for their support.

The Steps:

1. Find collaborators

Lobbying your elected official will be most successful if you have allies by your side. Whether they're friends, colleagues, or staff/volunteers from other local organizations in the [NY Renews coalition](#), having diverse voices at the meeting will help communicate the breadth of the coalition. Take a moment before beginning this process to ask yourself these questions:

Who else should be at this meeting with me? Whose voices does my elected official need to hear from?

2. Set up the meeting

Once/if you've identified some collaborators, get in touch with your elected official's office. You or someone in your network may know the best person to contact to set up the meeting; many legislators have a scheduler on staff. If you don't know, call the official's district office number posted on their website. Below is a sample script to guide your call:

Hi, my name is _____ and I'm a volunteer for the _____. I am looking to speak to the scheduler, is he or she available?

YES	<p><i>Hi, My name is _____ and I am a constituent of Senator/Assembly Member _____ and a volunteer for _____. I was hoping 2-3 of us could set up a meeting to discuss the goals of NY Renews. Is there a good date for the Senator/Assembly Member in the coming weeks?</i></p> <p>YES Great, settle on a time. Make sure you have the name of the scheduler in case you need to call back. They may ask for your contact info as well.</p> <p><i>Thank you so much for your time. We look forward to speaking with Senator/Assembly Member _____.</i></p>
NO	<p><i>Do you know a better time I could call back, or can you take a message?</i></p> <p>Grab a name and email so you can follow up if they don't get back to you.</p> <p><i>Ok, enjoy your day!</i></p>

Tips:

- Be conversational. This script is just a guide; feel free to respond to your contact's individual comments and concerns.
- Scheduling the meeting may take persistence. If you don't hear back after a few days, send a reminder and call back to follow up.
- If you've been trying for more than 2 weeks without any luck, email dan.sherrell@nyrenews.org for support.

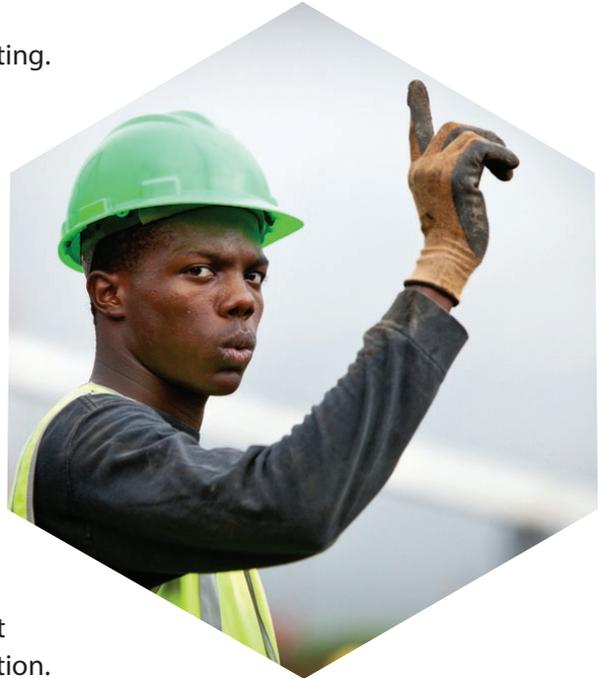
3. Know your elected official

Do a little research on your elected official before your meeting. Most importantly, [check this chart to see whether your elected official voted for or sponsored the Climate and Community Protection Act last year](http://bit.ly/2cmaHJW) [http://bit.ly/2cmaHJW]. You can also check out their website to see their committee memberships and positions in the legislature.

4. Know your own story

Know why YOU believe the campaign is important. Knowing this is often the first step to convincing others and connecting with their own motivations.

If you can say, "As a parent, I find myself thinking about my children's future and what it will look like..." or "As a business person, I have always believed we can find better solutions if we push ourselves..." you present yourself as a real person with a compelling argument for action.



5. Do the meeting

- A. Bring Prep Materials: [Print this NYR 1-pager for legislators](http://bit.ly/2bRafR9) and any other materials that might help you. [http://bit.ly/2bRafR9]
- B. Introduce Everyone in Your Group: Be sure to mention that you live in the Senator/Assembly Member's district and explain briefly why you care about the interconnected issues of climate change and economic and racial justice.
- C. Deliver Your "Elevator Pitch": You can draw from the NY Renews Legislative Platform, but give the best short version of your argument in your own words. Here are some sample talking points:
 - NY Renews is an unprecedented statewide coalition of 80+ organizations fighting for climate policies grounded in equity and justice for communities and working people.
 - We've come together to (1) work to transition New York to 100% clean, renewable energy, (2) create good jobs and protect workers through this transition, and (3) support low-income communities on the front lines of climate change.

- We support the New York State Climate and Community Protection Act, which could be the boldest state law to address climate change in the country, and are also pressing for passage of other policies in our Legislative Platform.

D. Answer Questions: The legislator may have specific questions about the coalition, the legislative platform, or the CCPA. If you don't know the answer based on the materials in this toolkit, feel free to let them know that you're not sure, but can follow up with a response. Email dan.sherrell@nyrenews.org if you need to consult on the question.

E. Make the Ask: If it's an Assembly Member, ask them to co-sponsor the CCPA. If they're already a co-sponsor, ask them to send a letter of support to the Speaker of the Assembly urging early passage next session.

If it's a Senator, ask if we can count on them to support the CCPA next session.

If the elected official is enthusiastic, ask them to go a step further, and make their support public by endorsing the CCPA in their constituent newsletter, and/or co-authoring an op-ed for the local paper.

F. Thanks: A legislator may not be immediately supportive or may even be opposed. Nonetheless, thank them, establish a next step for follow-up, and exchange contact info with a staffer.

6. Follow up

Send an email to the legislator and appropriate staff thanking them for the conversation. Remember, grassroots advocacy is best viewed as long-term relationship-building. As the campaign develops, stay in touch with the Legislator's office and keep them up-to-date on developments.

TACTIC 2: REACH OUT TO NEW ORGANIZATIONS

To stay vital, build power, and win, NY Renews needs to mobilize and engage as many New Yorkers as possible. Reaching out to new organizations provides a chance to bring in new constituencies, and continue to build a broad and diverse coalition. It also provides an opportunity to listen—to find out more about the priorities and perspectives of organizations in your area, and to use NY Renews as a vehicle to deepen intersectional activist networks and communities in your region.

The Asks: If interested, there are many ways for new organizations to plug into NY Renews, whether they have 20 hours or 20 minutes to spare.

- Minimal capacity: Sign on to the coalition and formally support our legislative platform and points of unity. Organizations can sign on to the coalition [here](http://bit.ly/2c1dn2S) [http://bit.ly/2c1dn2S], or at nyrenews.org.
- Some capacity: Join a committee. There are five working committees open to any coalition member, where the work of the coalition gets done: Organizing, Policy Development, Media & Communications, Arts & Engagement, and Fundraising. We invite organizations to participate in one or more of these committees, according to capacity and expertise. They can email dan.sherrell@nyrenews.org to be added.
- Significant capacity: Help organize an upcoming event in the organization's region, or join a meeting with an elected official.

The Steps: If you have an existing relationship with an organization, you can set up a meeting to learn what they're working on, bring them up to date on NY Renews work, and discuss possibilities for collaboration. If you don't have an existing relationship, you can take the following steps to reach out to potential allies.

1. Familiarize yourself with the [Jemez Principles](http://www.ejnet.org/ej/jemez.pdf), an invaluable resource on building just and equitable relationships. [<http://www.ejnet.org/ej/jemez.pdf>]
2. Identify Groups to Meet With – Talk to family and friends active in the community to see who's doing work around environmental, racial or economic justice, or sustainable business issues – any causes that might intersect with the goals of NY Renews. Give particular thought to engaging with groups working in low-income neighborhoods or communities of color, or that are supporting workers.
3. Attend a Meeting or Event – Participate in a group's meeting or event as an individual, rather than as a representative of NY Renews. Learn about the organization and the people that make it up, identify mutual interests, and see if their goals fit with NY Renews.
4. Set Up One-on-Ones – Meet one or more people in the organization individually to gain a deeper understanding of their worldview, experiences, and motivations. Learn about their history with the organization and where the organization is heading.
5. Meet with Staff – Once you have begun to build relationships and understand more about the organization, meet with staff to talk about NY Renews and how it aligns with the organization's goals. Put out some ideas on what their initial role might be in the NY Renews coalition, and how people you've met can play a part, while acknowledging their existing contributions to the movement.
6. Follow Up – If they join NY Renews, meet with people from their group periodically to maintain the relationship, and check in on how they are feeling about NY Renews and their role in it.



TACTIC 3: WRITE TO YOUR LOCAL PAPER

Letters to the Editor are a great tool for demonstrating public support for a campaign or effort. The opinion page is often the most read page of a newspaper, and public officials pay close attention to the opinion pages of their local papers.

Draw from the NY Renews points of unity, the NY Renews legislative platform, and the New York State Climate and Community Protection Act to develop your own key points.

Writing Tips

- Pay attention to the newspaper's guidelines. These can usually be found in the opinion section of the paper's website and will include where to send the letter, what identifying information they require (e.g. your name, email address, and phone number), and their word count limit. You can also peruse their published letters to get an idea of preferred length and style.
- In many newspapers, being responsive to an article in the paper ("I agree with the views expressed by Ms. X in Y article on Z date") enormously increases the chances of getting your letter printed. Give a personal example, explain how you or your organization is impacted by the story, or point out an important part of the story that you feel is being missed.
- Stick to the word count limit, which is often under 200 words!
- Reference a relevant recent event, local development, or pertinent news coverage.
- Convey your personal values/beliefs/emotions to demonstrate the depth of your connection to the issue.
- Keep the tone civil. Accusatory or letters that engage in personal attacks are almost certain not to be published!
- If the newspaper permits it (review other recent published letters or ask the newspaper), be sure to end your letter with a clear and specific "call to action" such as: "We call on Governor Cuomo and the Assembly and Senate leadership to pass ambitious climate and equity legislation in 2017, and to oppose the big polluters by standing with communities, workers, and the planet." If the newspaper doesn't like specific calls, you might make a less specific statement as to the urgency of the issue, such as "We need action by our state officials to address climate change and make sure impacted communities are protected."
- If your letter is published, share it! Be sure to let dan.sherrell@nyrenews.org know when and where it appeared.

NY Renews member organizations represent communities and constituents from Brooklyn to Buffalo to Binghamton to Brentwood, and everywhere in between. The full list of member organizations can be found at nyrenews.org.

If your organization is interested in hosting a public event supporting NY Renews in your area, get in touch with Campaign Coordinator Dan Sherrell: dan.sherrell@nyrenews.org