

**Lt. Governor David A. Paterson**

**John Burton Lecture Series**

**University at Albany**

**May 8, 2007**

**Energy Policy Moving from Complacency to Action**

Thank you for asking me to deliver this year's John Burton Lecture and for honoring me with the University's Distinguished Award for Outstanding Contributions to Public Service. It is particularly flattering to receive this award along with Sharon Dawes, David Kaczynski, Mary Ann Fish, and Commissioner John Egan.

Today, I want to talk about climate change and energy policy.

It is a well known truth those who don't adapt perish. Not only is New York facing its own energy crisis to meet the increasing demand of its citizens; we are also facing a dramatic global climate change crisis we must adapt to, both environmentally and industrially. Aside from a rapidly diminishing handful of skeptics, we all realize the scientific evidence is frighteningly irrefutable. Our reliance on fossil fuels coupled with the lack of a comprehensive national plan to reduce carbon dioxide emissions has and will continue to dramatically and negatively impact our environment. And these changes are progressing faster than we had anticipated – some conceivably within our lifetime.

Let's look at some of the facts:

In February the United Nation's International Panel on Climate Change reported with 90 percent certainty that warming of the earth's temperature since the 1950s was a result from continuing buildup of heat-trapping greenhouse gas emissions. Amongst its findings:

- Eleven of the last 12 years, from 1995-2006, are among the 12 warmest years of global surface temperature on record since record keeping began in 1850.
- Global temperatures will rise by 3.2 to 7.2 degrees Fahrenheit by 2100, and sea levels will rise one-half to two feet.
- Sea ice is projected to shrink in both the Arctic and Antarctic regions, with some projections indicating late summer Arctic ice disappearing almost entirely

The consequences of this phenomenon are sobering:

- Stressed ecosystems could result in the extinction of up to 30 percent of our plant and animal species;
- By mid-century, we will see a 10 to 40 percent increase of average river runoff and water availability in high altitude and some wet tropical areas, causing increased flooding, disruption and homelessness.

- More violent hurricanes and tropical storms will occur as the ocean and atmospheric temperatures continue to rise, further stressing low-lying coastal areas
- Crop productivity will likely increase temporarily in many areas as the rise in temperatures lengthen the growing season, but will ultimately decrease as temperatures continue to rise, resulting in increased hunger particularly in poorer regions impacted.
- Health effects will vary, with increased deaths, disease and injury due to heat waves, floods, storms, fires and droughts.

In addition to the environmental impact, there is also just as importantly, the social justice issue. Global warming is an international crisis and it is a moral issue. We must take responsibility for our “climate debt,” and assist those nations most in need and in danger from the impacts of climate change.

- In most cases those people at most risk from the impact of climate change live in countries contributing the least amount to greenhouse gas emissions. These countries also tend to be the poorest, while those countries, such as the United States, have the most resources to address the problem. We must encourage the research and development in these nations as well to ensure their sustainability as we move forward.
- Irrefutable scientific evidence indicates climate change is occurring and human actions are contributing to the increase of greenhouse gas emissions every day. And let’s not forget this report has been endorsed by more than 120 countries, including the United States. This report will once again spark the debate as to why the United States has not signed onto the Kyoto Protocol.
- The vast majority of the American public is cognizant of the dire future consequences of not taking significant and immediate action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. A recent Time magazine poll (March 26, 2006) found that 85% of the American public believe the earth is warming. They are also keenly aware solutions exist to reduce these emissions, and the Bush Administration has consistently thwarted these efforts on the national and international fronts.
- Shortly after taking office, President Bush rejected the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, arguing the U.N. treaty’s requirement to reduce U.S. emissions to below 6 billion tons per year would have resulted in a loss of U.S. jobs. He objected, too, that such high-polluting developing nations as China and India are not required to reduce emissions.
- Yet with only 5% of the world’s population, the US contributes 28% of the world’s total greenhouse gas emissions. On a per capita basis, we produce ten times the energy of developing countries like China and India.

In his State of the Union Address, President Bush referred to climate change as a “serious problem”. Yet the Bush Administration falls short of implementing any significant policies to address this issue. In the absence of such federal leadership it becomes

imperative that state and local leaders step up to the plate with solutions to address this crisis.

- States across the country are collaborating efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Most recently five western states (California, Arizona, Oregon, New Mexico and Washington) have joined forces to target a cap on their regional CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Here in the Northeast nine states have joined together in the nation's first Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative. The cumulative impact of these initiatives will not only have a dramatic impact on greenhouse gas emissions in this country each year, but will additionally set the stage for a national cap-and-trade market based program.
- Just last month, in two landmark clean air decisions the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the states. The court ruled EPA does have the authority, under the Clean Air Act, to regulate greenhouse gas emissions and require existing power plants to install state of the art pollution control technologies at their facilities, a strong rebuke to the Bush administration's position to avoid these important environmental policy debates. The "same court" that decided in 2000 that Al Gore was not President, has now embraced the "Inconvenient Truth" that the EPA must regulate greenhouse gasses.

Global warming presents each of us with a question—do we continue with the status quo or are we ready to make significant cultural and lifestyle alterations to avoid a catastrophic tipping point? Future actions will require a fundamental change of philosophy in how we live our lives.

We must make two fundamental adjustments. First, we must reduce New York's energy consumption by conserving energy today. It is predicted New York will require at least an additional 10 to 15 percent of power generation over the next 10 years to meet the increasing demand of our citizens.

- The Spitzer administration has recently announced the most aggressive energy efficiency initiative in the nation. By 2015 we will reduce electricity consumption in New York 15 percent below forecasted levels through increased energy efficiency and conservation measures.
- In terms of dollars and cents, it actually costs less (about 2cents per kilowatt hour saved) to improve efficiency than it costs to build and operate a new gas-fired power plant (about 5 cents per kilowatt hour saved).
- And conserving energy also means reducing our carbon foot print. Our 15 by 15 initiative will reduce annual CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 12.8 million tons, or the equivalent of removing 2.5 million automobiles from the road.
- So we can either spend billions of dollars to build every new power plant needed, or we can invest less money and curb our greenhouse gas emissions by reducing this energy demand 15 percent.

How will we accomplish this?

In New York when electricity customers do the conscientious thing and conserve energy, utilities lose money. This discourages utilities from promoting energy efficiency and conservation. We will eliminate this disincentive and instead provide incentives to utilities to promote energy efficiency. Recently the PSC announced a proposed plan to decouple a utility's profits from the amount of energy being consumed. This method has been successful in other States including California. It's time for New York to step up to the plate.

We will introduce legislation which will set new efficiency standards for the most inefficient appliances, including residential furnaces and boilers and walk-in refrigerators and freezers.

We will also address energy efficiency in state buildings. State government is New York's single largest energy consumer. We need to do a complete audit of State energy usage in state facilities. Last year alone our energy bill was over \$700 million. If we want New Yorkers to reduce their energy consumption, we must lead by example. And this administration is doing that. Last week, first lady Silda Spitzer announced a plan to turn the Governor's mansion into a "green building". By installing solar panels and compact fluorescent bulbs, using hybrid vehicles and electric lawnmowers, and replacing inefficient washing machines and dryers, electric consumption and greenhouse gas emissions will be reduced by 50%.

Our second fundamental adjustment will be a major investment in renewable energy technologies, and a new generation of cleaner, more efficient power sources. Renewable energy already provides nearly 20 percent of New York's total energy usage, compared to 6 percent nationwide. And New York is fertile ground for further innovation in this area.

- Recently NYSERDA and the PSC announced the approval of 21 contract awards for clean, renewable energy sources in New York. This investment will provide 880 megawatts of in-state renewable energy capacity, estimated to produce approximately 2.6 million megawatt hours of renewable electricity annually. Enough clean energy to supply approximately 435,000 average size homes with power.
- We will adopt a new power plant siting law. Since June 2003, when the old law (known as Article ten) expired, the state has been without a process to site new power plants. The new "Clean Power Supply Act" will allow for an expedited process for major power generating facilities that produce very low or no emissions.
- And we will work towards policy changes impacting net metering regulations. If New York is going to move forward, we must provide a reliable infrastructure that can meet the increase in demand from its citizens and increase our economy;

I just returned from a statewide energy tour which provided me with the opportunity to witness first hand the talented and skilled individuals in the renewable and alternative energy field in New York State.

- In New York City we witnessed the historic deployment of the world's first commercial free-flow hydroelectric project at Roosevelt Island where underwater turbines generate electricity by tapping the kinetic energy of rapidly flowing water caused by the tides. The successful completion of this project could provide clean power to five thousand homes on the Island. There are many regions of the United States and the world that are well suited for this technology, and we have the world's first project right here in New York State.
- In Central New York I visited with many of the state's best and brightest students and professors at one of our finest environmental science schools. These students gave presentations on the development of willow biomass crops, biodiesel, environmental and energy audits, and green roof technologies. Our academic institutions are on the cutting edge of these developments. Building on existing knowledge and expertise in our research community will help to ensure a viable and sustainable economic future and production capability.
- In the Southern Tier of New York I met with the Agricultural community, and discussed the impacts they face, including the impacts of corn-based ethanol on their industry.
- And in Western New York, I had the honor of introducing one of the world's leaders in the fight to address global warming – Vice President Al Gore – before 3,500 high school and college students at the University of Buffalo.

The passion and dedication of these young people to these issues was truly inspiring. It is that shared commitment to energy conservation and environmental stewardship which will move New York to the forefront of the country. New York has the ability and vision to move forward and become a national leader in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and developing renewable energy technologies. We have entrepreneurship. We have talent. We have ability. We need to focus it, not on a battle for consumption with international companies, but on a battle for what would be sustainability. New York will be the leader as the global community seeks to usher in an era of environmental consciousness rather than complacency.

It is apparent that we are reaching a critical point in the history of humanity. Sometimes, when we think about it, the climate crisis is almost overwhelming. We begin to ask ourselves “what impact can I have as an individual”? We may even become cynical – “why should I recycle this bottle - it all goes to the same place anyway”.

But the truth is that as overwhelming as it may be, we all must do our part. In this room we are all able in our professional and personal capacities to have a lasting impact. Those of you among us who are government officials and policy makers - all of your policies must be “green” policies. Your innovative thinking can have a greater impact than you may think. Those of you who are students - realize that you are now part of a green generation. There is no longer room for cynicism or complacency. We must act as a community, a global community - for perhaps the first time in world history - to address this crisis. We can do it - many years ago a President looked to the sky and said we will one day walk on the moon. Although he did not know how we would get

there, he pointed to the sky and said we will travel beyond our current abilities to achieve what humanity has dreamed of, throughout history. Today, we are faced with an even greater challenge and yet we are presented with an even greater opportunity. We all have the ability to be the one who points and dreams. We all have the ability, in our own personal capacity, to lead and achieve what so many have dreamed of. I hope you will join me in this effort.