



**Agenda – Friday, February 27, 2026  
Video Conference  
9 am to 11 am**

**Attending:** Kate Kressmann-Kehoe, Anna Kelles, Anne Erling, Anne Rabe, Ann Heidenreich, Brian Eden, Cathy Salibian, Dan Lamb, Save Bradley, David Kay, Dawn Montanye, Don Haas, Eric Banford, Eric Dawson, Gerrie Wiley, Guillermo Metz, Hailley Delisle, Hilary Swartwood, Ingrid Zabel, James Doherty, Jennifer Tavares, Jeremy Sauer, Joe Wilson, June Gordon, Kate Purcea, John King, Beth Ellen Clark Joseph, Pete Wirth, Louise Mygatt, Nancy Jacobson, Emma Cook, Stephanie & Don Banaszak, Cole Tucker, Melissa O'Mara, Bill Reinhardt, Tom Hirasuna, Terry Calhoun, Siobhan Hull, Scott Endler, Susan, Scott Doyle, Roseann Lorifice, Rebecca Evans, Ray Burger, Paul Moore, Keith Shue, Leah Zeikowitz, Leon Porter, Margaret Johnson, Margaret MCasland, Marie McRae, Mark Dunlea, Martha Robertson, Melle, Mike K, MK Owens, Nick Goldsmith

**A Debate on Nuclear Power in New York**

*This month we debated the following proposition:*

"Governor Hochul recently announced an initiative to expand the state's nuclear energy sector by 5GW. She said doing so would strengthen New York's grid and help the state meet climate goals and rising energy demand. Does the governor's proposal offer the most effective path forward in implementing the CLCPA's priorities and ensuring an affordable energy future?"

*There were two speakers for each side. Here are their bios:*

*In Support*

**Kate Kressmann-Kehoe** is from Rochester, NY. She is a documentary filmmaker and was co-producer of a documentary on the effects of climate change in Western New York State. As a volunteer, Kate is a member of the Citizens' Climate Lobby (CCL) Rochester Chapter's Coordinating Committee and also serves on the CCL NYS Grid Reform Committee. She also volunteers as the NYS Lead for Mothers for Nuclear and is on the Steering Committee for Nuclear New York.

**Eric Dawson** is a nuclear energy advocate, speaker, and writer, having co-founded Nuclear New York in 2019. He is also active in sustainable investing and local, grassroots political action in New York City focused on finding creative solutions to social problems. He has had writing published or has been interviewed by PBS, National Review, Reason, and Capital Tonight.

### In Opposition

**Anne Rabe** has over 40 years of experience as an organizer and lobbyist working for environmental and social justice groups, including the Center for Health, Environment & Justice. She is the co-founder of the NYS Labor & Environment Network and a recipient of 13 awards. She retired in 2025, and co-coordinates the Alliance for Nuclear-Free NY statewide campaign; a environmental justice campaign on the Niagara Falls Goodyear facility; and the statewide Zero Waste NY coalition.

**Mark Dunlea** is the author of *Putting Out the Planetary Fire*; chair of the Green Education and Legal Fund; and co-founder of the NY Public Interest Research Group. A graduate of RPI and Albany Law School, he is the former national organizer for the Campaign for Safe Energy and co-coordinator of the NYS Non-Nuclear Network.

*The format of the debate was as follows:*

- In Favor Team: 20 minutes
- In Opposition Team: 20 minutes
- In Favor Rebuttal: 10 minutes
- In Opposition Rebuttal: 10 minutes
- In Favor Team Summary: 10 minutes
- In Opposition Team Summary: 10 minutes
- Audience Q&A: 15-20 minutes

### **Overview**

The debate centered on Governor Hochul's proposal to expand New York's nuclear energy sector by five gigawatts. Supporters, Kate Cressman Kehoe and Eric Dawson, emphasized nuclear's reliability, zero emissions, and cost-effectiveness, citing a \$28 billion savings estimate from NYSERDA. They highlighted nuclear's role in decarbonizing the grid and displacing coal. Opponents, Anne Rabe and Mark Dunlea, argued against nuclear's high costs, environmental risks, and health impacts, citing a \$33 billion subsidy over 20 years and increased cancer rates near reactors. They advocated for renewable energy and energy efficiency as safer and more cost-effective solutions. The meeting discussed the political leadership needed for effective climate policies, highlighting Governor Hochul's shift away from cap and trade and her violation of the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA). The debate focused on the relative value of different energy sources, with nuclear providing 20% of actual generation despite only 9% installed capacity. The land use implications of solar and wind were debated, with estimates suggesting 3-4% of land would be needed. The discussion also covered the challenges of offshore wind, the need for backup energy sources for nuclear power, and the economic viability of renewables versus nuclear power.

### **Opening Statements: Kate Kressmann-Kehoe**

- Kate Kressmann-Kehoe shared her personal experience with climate change, including making her own solar panels and understanding the grid's role in decarbonization.
- She highlighted the importance of nuclear energy in the US, noting that there are 92 nuclear plants providing 20% of overall electricity and 50% of carbon-free electricity.
- Kressmann-Kehoe discussed the complexity of the grid and the need for reliable, zero-emission energy sources to meet the growing demand, especially with the shift towards electrifying various sectors.
- She emphasized the importance of capacity factor in energy sources, noting that nuclear power runs continuously, unlike wind and solar which are intermittent.
- Kressmann-Kehoe argued that nuclear energy is crucial for grid reliability and meeting climate goals, citing the example of the Indian Point nuclear plant's closure and its impact on the grid's stability and emissions.

### **Opening Statements: Eric Dawson**

- Eric Dawson advocated for a rational, effective energy policy that considers long-term impacts and multiple factors, including energy poverty, pollution, and national security.
- He highlighted the reliability of nuclear energy, noting its high capacity factor and ability to provide firm power, unlike intermittent renewables.
- Dawson discussed the UN's 2021 study, which found that nuclear energy has a lower carbon footprint than even solar and wind over the long term due to energy density.
- He argued that nuclear energy is essential for displacing coal and reducing global mining, which is harmful to the environment and human health.
- Dawson emphasized the economic and environmental benefits of nuclear energy, including its ability to provide high-paying jobs and reduce reliance on foreign supply chains.

### **Opposition: Anne Rabe and Mark Dunlea**

- Anne Rabe outlined the reasons for the Alliance for Nuclear Free New York's call for a moratorium on new nuclear reactors, including high utility bills, cancer risks, and environmental impacts.
- She highlighted the lack of comprehensive assessments of the economic, health, and environmental impacts of nuclear power, citing the example of Indian Point.
- Rabe discussed the high costs of storing and managing nuclear waste, noting that it is not included in nuclear cost analyses and will be a long-term burden on taxpayers.
- She emphasized the need for a moratorium to protect New Yorkers from the risks of nuclear power and to focus on renewable energy and energy efficiency.
- Mark Dunlea added that nuclear power is the most expensive energy source and that the governor's proposal is based on unrealistic cost estimates and unfounded hope.

### **Rebuttal: Eric Dawson and Kate Kressmann-Kehoe**

- Eric Dawson argued that nuclear energy is essential for meeting the state's climate goals and providing a reliable, zero-emission energy source.
- He dismissed the opposition's concerns about nuclear waste, noting that it is manageable and that newer technologies can reduce its volume.
- Dawson emphasized the importance of nuclear energy in reducing global greenhouse gas emissions and displacing coal, which is responsible for many deaths.
- He argued that the opposition's reliance on correlation studies is flawed and that nuclear energy has a strong safety record.
- Kate Kressman-Kehoe added that nuclear energy is the most efficient and cost-effective way to decarbonize the grid, citing the example of France's successful nuclear program.

### **Rebuttal: Anne Rabe and Mark Dunlea**

- Anne Rabe reiterated the health and environmental risks of nuclear power, citing the Harvard studies on increased cancer rates near nuclear reactors.
- She argued that renewable energy is a safer and more cost-effective alternative, noting that it is faster and cheaper to build and operate.
- Mark Dunlea added that nuclear power is not carbon-free and that it emits radioactive air pollution, which harms human health and the environment.
- He criticized the governor's proposal for ignoring the financial and environmental impacts of nuclear power and for relying on unrealistic cost estimates.
- Both speakers emphasized the need for a comprehensive assessment of nuclear energy's impacts and for focusing on renewable energy and energy efficiency.

### **Summaries: In Favor of Nuclear Energy**

- Eric Dawson summarized that nuclear energy is essential for meeting the state's climate goals and providing a reliable, zero-emission energy source.
- He argued that nuclear energy is the most efficient and cost-effective way to decarbonize the grid, citing the example of France's successful nuclear program.
- Dawson dismissed the opposition's concerns about nuclear waste and safety, noting that nuclear energy has a strong safety record and that newer technologies can reduce its volume.
- He emphasized the importance of including nuclear energy in the state's energy mix to ensure long-term decarbonization and to provide certainty for investors.
- Kate Kressman-Kehoe added that nuclear energy is crucial for grid reliability and meeting climate goals, citing the example of the Indian Point nuclear plant's closure and its impact on the grid's stability and emissions.

### **Summaries: Opposed to Nuclear Energy**

- Anne Rabe summarized that nuclear power is not a safe or cost-effective energy source and that it poses significant health and environmental risks.

- She argued that renewable energy is a safer and more cost-effective alternative, noting that it is faster and cheaper to build and operate.
- Rabe criticized the governor's proposal for ignoring the financial and environmental impacts of nuclear power and for relying on unrealistic cost estimates.
- She emphasized the need for a comprehensive assessment of nuclear energy's impacts and for focusing on renewable energy and energy efficiency.
- Mark Dunlea added that nuclear power is not carbon-free and that it emits radioactive air pollution, which harms human health and the environment.
- Dunlea observed that New York is doing a poor job on moving to renewable energy. We need political leadership at the top, but Governor Hochul three years ago began to pivot away from renewable energy.

### **Q&A Session: Initial Question about Value of Different Energy Sources to Grid**

- Kressman-Kehoe was asked about the differences in value to the grid of different energy sources.
- Kressman-Kehoe explained that the value of a gigawatt of energy source A versus source B depends on their capacity factors.
- Nuclear power generated more actual power compared to wind and solar due to its continuous nature.

### **Land Use and Solar Energy**

- Martha Robertson asked about the land use required for solar energy and mentions her daughter's experience in the solar business.
- Rabe emphasized the need for a renewable energy transition plan of action and mentioned agrivoltaics.
- Dunlea pointed out that many people are working on land use issues related to solar energy.
- Dawson highlighted the trade-offs between housing costs, farmland, and nature preserves in relation to large-scale solar and wind projects.

### **Offshore Wind and Political Challenges**

- Dunlea discussed a stronger climate bill that included a target for offshore wind, which was increased in the CLCPA.
- Dawson noted that offshore wind faces opposition from special interest groups like rich beachfront property owners and the fishing industry.
- Dunlea recounted earlier efforts to move forward with offshore wind and he cited Mark Jacobson's study in which he concluded that up to 40% of NY's electricity could come from offshore wind.

### **Backup Energy for Nuclear Power**

- Pete Wirth asked about the backup energy source for nuclear power during refueling and maintenance.
- Kressman-Kehoe explained that nuclear power plants schedule outages when demand is low, relying on the rest of the grid.
- Dawson added that natural gas is the primary backup for nuclear power.

### **Upfront Costs and Long-Term Investments**

- Dawn Montanye asked about the upfront costs of nuclear power and the need for a mix of energy sources.
- Kressman-Kehoe explained the complexity of financing new energy projects and the role of credits, loans, and power guarantees.
- Dawson argued against the either/or approach, emphasizing the need to use all available tools to address energy needs.

### **Advocacy for Solar and Renewables**

- Bill Reinhardt, an advocate for solar, shared findings that 3-4% of land in the state would be required for solar energy.
- He emphasized the potential for rooftop solar and agrivoltaics to reduce land use issues.
- Reinhardt expressed concern that the focus on nuclear power is crowding out investments in renewables.
- He highlighted the economic viability of short-term renewable energy projects compared to long-term investments in nuclear power.

### **Global Trends in Renewable Energy**

- William Van asked why the rest of the world is focusing on renewable energy if nuclear is cheaper.
- Dawson explained that while renewables are growing, they are starting from a small base and face challenges in displacing coal.
- Dawson argued that nuclear power is more reliable and appropriate for long-term energy needs.
- Kressman-Kehoe noted that China is also building nuclear plants in addition to renewables.