Memorandum of Opposition

S.1755 (Ortt)/A.5262 (Norris)

Title: Relates to the Location of Certain Wind Electric Generation Facilities

Statement of Opposition: This legislation, (A.5262/S.1755) if enacted, will present a grave danger to our national security. The threat of climate change is real and obstructing solutions to this global crisis, including wind energy development, harms all New Yorkers. In only the past few years, New York has been pounded by superstorms, deluged with floods and scorched with record heat due to the advancing effects of a warming planet. Beyond the growing frequency and intensity of severe weather events, New Yorkers will be facing the economic and social costs of dying oceans, agricultural blight, rapid changes to ecosystems and rising sea levels if we do not work together to significantly reduce carbon and methane emissions. Building the infrastructure to harness wind energy is an essential part of the solution. The Clean Energy Standard, adopted by the New York Public Service Commission in 2016, mandates 50 percent of New York’s electricity is sourced from clean, renewable energy resources by 2030. Wind generation is now cheaper than coal and gas and will be a critical resource to achieve New York’s Clean Energy Standard mandate.

Based upon spurious information, A.5262/S.1755 seeks to ban any wind energy development within 40 miles of “an airfield or airbase under jurisdiction of any federal military department or an air traffic control radar site, weather radar site, or aircraft navigation aid”, out of concerns that wind turbines could disrupt radar signals resulting in accidents. With the current establishment of military infrastructure across the state, such a policy would make 5,000 square miles of New York State off limits to wind development, especially in areas where it would be most advantageous – coastal Long Island and along the Great Lakes.

Are wind turbines an insurmountable problem to accurate radar forecasting? No. In the past, there have been signal anomalies and sporadic radar disturbance created by wind farms that air traffic controllers have learned to work around. The same can be said for tall buildings, radio towers and other large structures that deflect radar signals and are not banned by this legislation. In 2013, the Air Force invested considerable resources in ROEMS II, a software program that can account for such interference through modeling and compensation algorithms. In 2015, the Department of Defense Siting Clearinghouse said "generic standoff distances are not useful" in the context of protecting radar technology from intrusions like wind farms. Instead, the Department of Defense has a process to evaluate and, if necessary, deny the permits to a wind farm if truly there is a national security issue present that cannot be mitigated through technological fixes. This legislation is unnecessary and does nothing to advance national security. Without wind farms, however, we will not be able to address the global security crisis of climate change.

Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter Urges Your “No” vote on A.5262/S.1755