

The Gas Industry is Gaslighting New York

National Grid, NY Propane, SKDK, American Petroleum Institute are the worst! [Click to play for a preview](#) 



1. Introduction

The fossil oil and gas industry’s massive relentless worldwide campaign to stymie climate action, targeting everyone from ordinary citizens to the highest echelons of political and legislative powers, has been well-documented. A recent [three-part PBS docuseries](#) links our collective failure to take meaningful and timely climate action to this campaign of (1) [Denial](#), (2) [Doubt](#), and (3) [Delay](#) perpetrated by the fossil fuel industry.

It is one thing to watch or read about the oil and gas industry’s deceit, but quite another to witness it unfold in our communities and experience it first-hand, and to hear our local/state legislators and their staff innocently or deliberately parrot the disinformation that their offices have been infected with. This article catalogs the campaigns by oil and gas companies and some gas utilities in New York State to delay and dilute the provisions of its 2019 climate law, the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA), particularly its building electrification targets that pack the most emissions, pollution, health, and economic benefits for the state.

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2. New Yorkers for Affordable Energy

“[New Yorkers for Affordable Energy](#),” is an astroturfing group backed by the American Petroleum Institute, Enbridge, Millennium Pipeline, some New York utility owners ([National Grid](#), [Central Hudson](#), [Avangrid/NYSEG](#)), and others. While it has been around for a few years, its disinformation campaign went into overdrive during the NYS Fiscal Year 2023 budget negotiations, in which a mandate to phase out fossil fuels from new buildings was being considered – not only because the building sector is New York’s biggest source of greenhouse gas emissions, but also because New York leads the nation in deaths and sickness from pollution due to on-site fossil fuel combustion in buildings, and new all-electric construction with heat pumps is cost competitive or less expensive than dual-fuel construction. In other words, climate-friendly all-electric buildings would save lives while generally costing less to build, operate, and maintain.

Yet, while the NYS Senate supported the measure and Governor Hochul remained neutral, the [sudden and substantial disinformation blast](#) by this front group using broadcast, on-line, and social media ads, robocalls, and mailers was enough to bully the NYS Assembly and its speaker into blocking the building decarbonization measure in the budget as well as during the remainder of the legislative session.

Here is a [complete list of the entities](#) behind this outfit, and more context can be found [here](#) and [here](#). In addition to the usual players, some of New York’s utilities seem to be using the money they earn from ratepayers to beam lies at them!

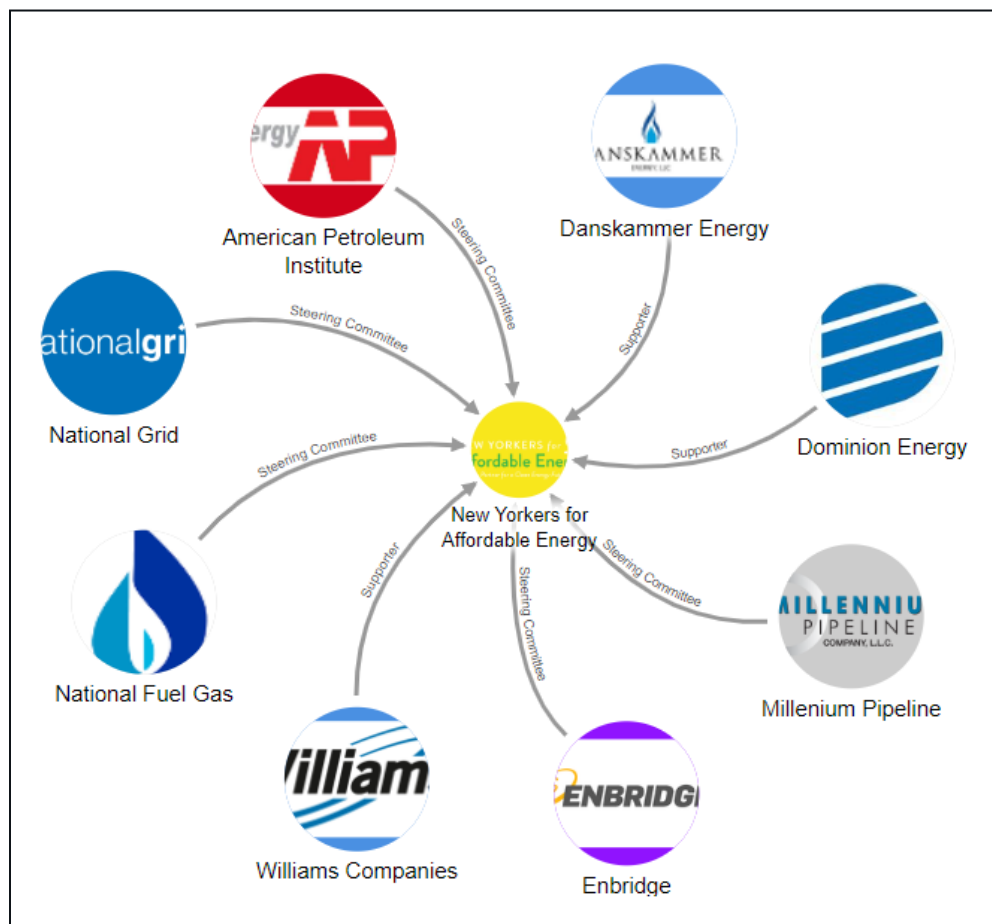


Figure 1: A graphic from [this great piece](#) by [littlesis.org](#) on “New Yorkers for Affordable Energy” shows the major backers of this astroturfing group and their roles.

3. Two Hooks make a very big crook!

[Michelle Hook](#), the executive director of the front group New Yorkers for Affordable Energy, is the Vice President of Public Affairs at Danskammer Energy, the coal and gas power company that has been poisoning Newburgh for decades. Interestingly, she's also a [board member](#) of New York League of Conservation Voters ([NYLCV](#)). NYLCV has a long history of appointing board members with fossil fuel ties who sometimes actively [push for fossil fuel expansion!](#)

The buildings sector appeared to be a low-priority item in [NYLCV's 2022 policy agenda](#), but they did release a belated [memo of support](#) for the All-Electric Building Act in early May. With its own board member playing a role, this critical bill for stopping fossil-fuel expansion in New York failed because it was never brought up for a vote. Yet, NYLCV does not mention this setback in its [recap of the 2022 legislative session](#) (**Figure 2**; ironically, it uses images of buildings as backdrop), even though the New York's Climate Action Council clearly states in its [draft scoping plan](#) (pp 125–127) that passing this legislation in 2022 for a 2024 start of implementation is critical for New York to meet its GHG emissions reduction targets from the building sector. While the New York State legislature took some baby climate steps, the 2022 legislative session, like the previous two, [spectacularly failed](#) to stop the expansion of fossil fuels in the state. Despite the so-called “nation leading” climate law that the NYS legislators have been patting themselves on the back about for the last three years, fossil fuels continue to grow in New York with no signs of a near-term reversal of this trend.

As fossil-fuel expansion continues unabated in New York, many state legislators continue to earn [fantastic NYLCV ratings](#) because NYLCV rates them based only on their votes on the bills that the leadership of the two houses brings to the floor for a vote. Some legislators earning these high environmental ratings privately urge the leadership to refrain from advancing meaningful climate bills, like the all-electric new construction mandate, often because they deem these bills to be politically risky, in part due to fossil-fuel disinformation campaigns illustrated in this article. This saves them from being scored on these bills and their failure to support them escapes public scrutiny.

The graphic features the NYLCV logo at the top left, which includes a stylized green tree and a black bird silhouette. Below the logo is a photograph of Michelle Hook. To the right of the photo is her name and title. Further right is a photograph of a city skyline with the text 'Recapping the End of Session in Albany'. Below this is a paragraph of text about the legislative session. At the bottom right, a red-bordered box contains a tip about the 100% NYLCV rating.

NYLCV Endorses Candidates Across New York State

Michelle Hook
Board Member, Capital Region

Michelle comes to the energy field with nearly 20 years of experience in communications. She has been the Director of Public Relations and Community Outreach for Millennium Pipeline Company since December of 2015.

Recapping the End of Session in Albany

The New York Legislature wrapped up its 2022 legislative session on the weekend of June 3rd, leaving Albany for the year after passing several important bills that were part of the NYLCV's 2022 State Policy Agenda.

Tip: The **100% NYLCV** rating that you often see various NYS legislators flashing in their campaign materials is **100% meaningless!** Why? See text...

Figure 2: Fossil gas executive Michelle Hook is the [Executive Director](#) of New Yorkers for Affordable Energy and a board member of New York League of Conservation Voters (NYLCV).

Michelle Hook's husband, [Morgan Hook](#) is a [managing director](#) with SKDKnickerbocker, a PR and marketing firm that often engages with front groups and is [contracted to support New Yorkers for Affordable Energy](#), making the Hooks a subject of social-media ridicule as a [power couple of fossil fuel corruption](#) in New York. Other than running public disinformation campaigns aimed directly at citizens, SKDK also specializes in amplifying the propaganda of the corrupt entities in the coalitions behind its front groups by ghostwriting for them, as shown in **Figure 3**. Note that SKDK has close ties with the Democratic party and also likely runs campaign PR for some Democratic NYS legislators.

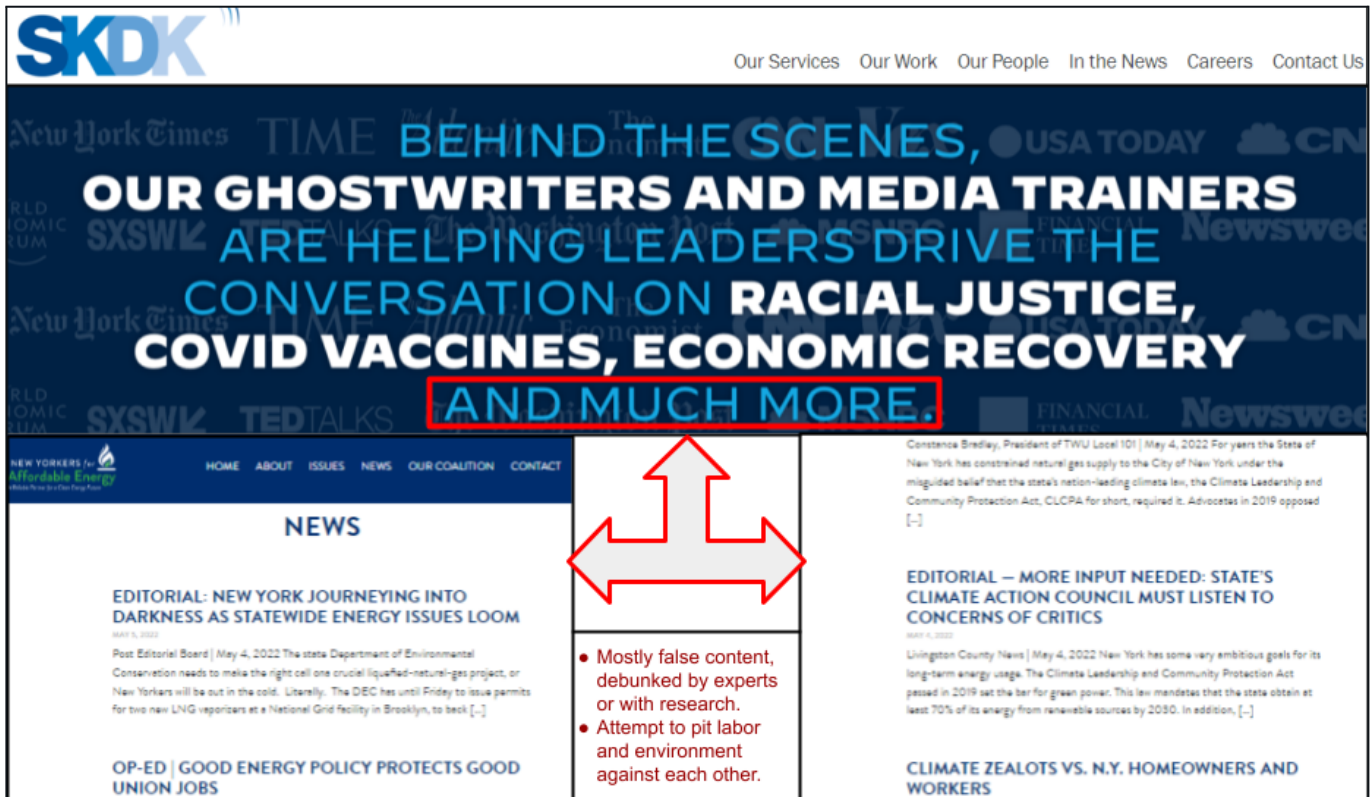


Figure 3: Some likely examples of SKDK’s handiwork, supporting the agenda of the fossil-fuel front group, New Yorkers for Affordable Energy.

4. National Grid

While there are many famously corrupt fossil-fuel companies, corporate lobbying groups, and corporate front groups that have come together to form New Yorkers for Affordable Energy, the ring leader National Grid, which is at the forefront of attacking the CLCPA, deserves special mention. National Grid is a British ultra corrupt, legally-monopolistic utility that intends to not only continue distributing and selling fossil gas, but to continue expanding gas infrastructure to increase gas distribution and sales, in complete disregard of settled science on the absolutely devastating climate and health impacts of these plans. The fact that the characterization of National Grid as ultra corrupt isn’t an exaggeration can be readily confirmed by a Google search with the term “National Grid Executives Jail.” **Figure 4** shows some of the top search results.

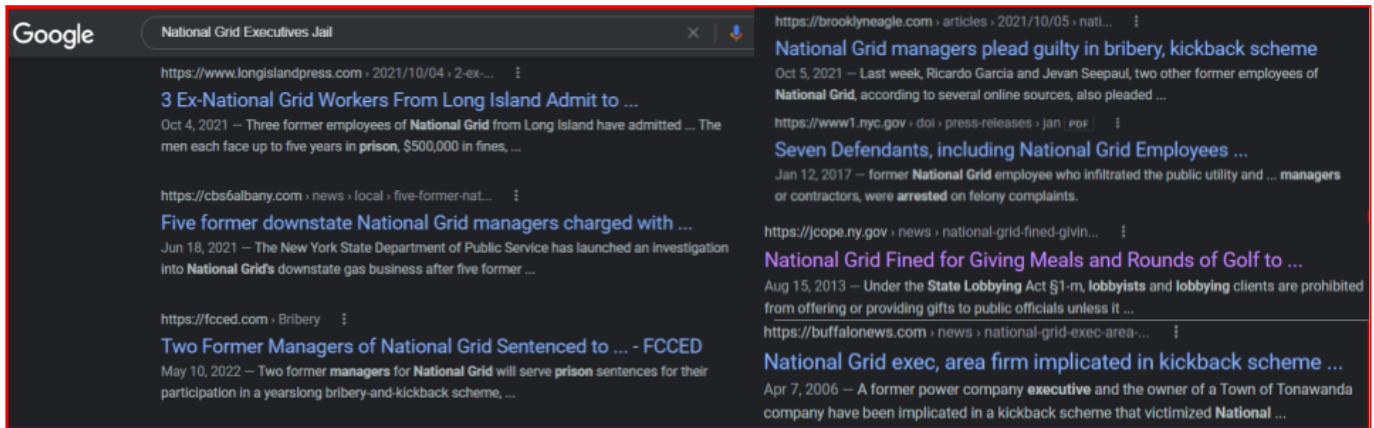


Figure 4: A Google search of “National Grid executives jail” yields multiple links with different dates, places, and crimes. The same search with NYSEG, a similarly sized NYS utility, yields almost nothing.

Astroturfing and front groups is just one of the myriad ways National Grid spreads disinformation. Their executives have shown up at Climate Action Council’s [public hearings](#) and NY State Assembly’s [public hearing on all-electric buildings](#) to raise faux concerns about “affordability and reliability” and to promote false solutions like Renewable Natural Gas (RNG) and Hydrogen. While under the best of scenarios, the available amount of RNG can only substitute a tiny fraction of fossil gas, and hydrogen is a totally unsuitable alternative (as a little Google search will readily reveal), National Grid continues to push these false solutions or non-solutions because building unnecessary pipelines and other infrastructure is the most profitable part of a regulated gas monopoly’s business. They also use the promise of RNG and Hydrogen as backup fuels to support gas infrastructure, while deliberately sidestepping the fact that due to low volumes, the delivery cost per therm would be exorbitant.

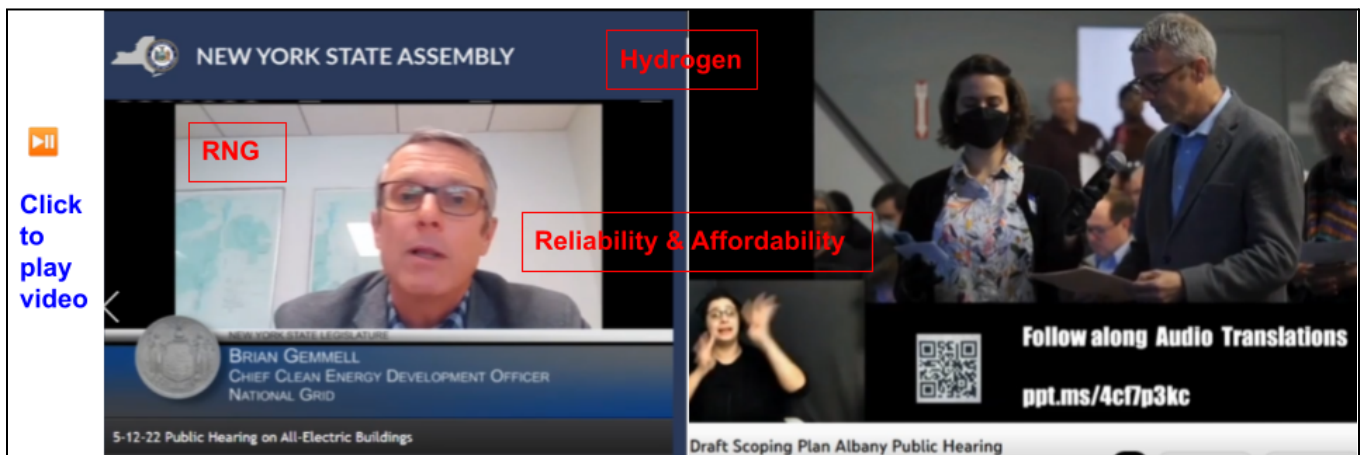


Figure 5: Clicking on the image above will play video clips to show that the only reason why National Grid’s Chief Greenwashing Officer hasn’t featured in Figure 4 yet is that these testimonies are not under oath.

National Grid and other gas utilities like Central Hudson have access to millions of their customers, which they misuse not only for greenwashing and spreading disinformation through direct emails and bill inserts, but also to intimidate elected officials into accepting their agenda. **Figure 6** shows images of portions of such emails sent to customers by National Grid to [greenwash](#) and to [pressure lawmakers and state agencies](#), and by Central Hudson to [oppose the CLCPA](#).

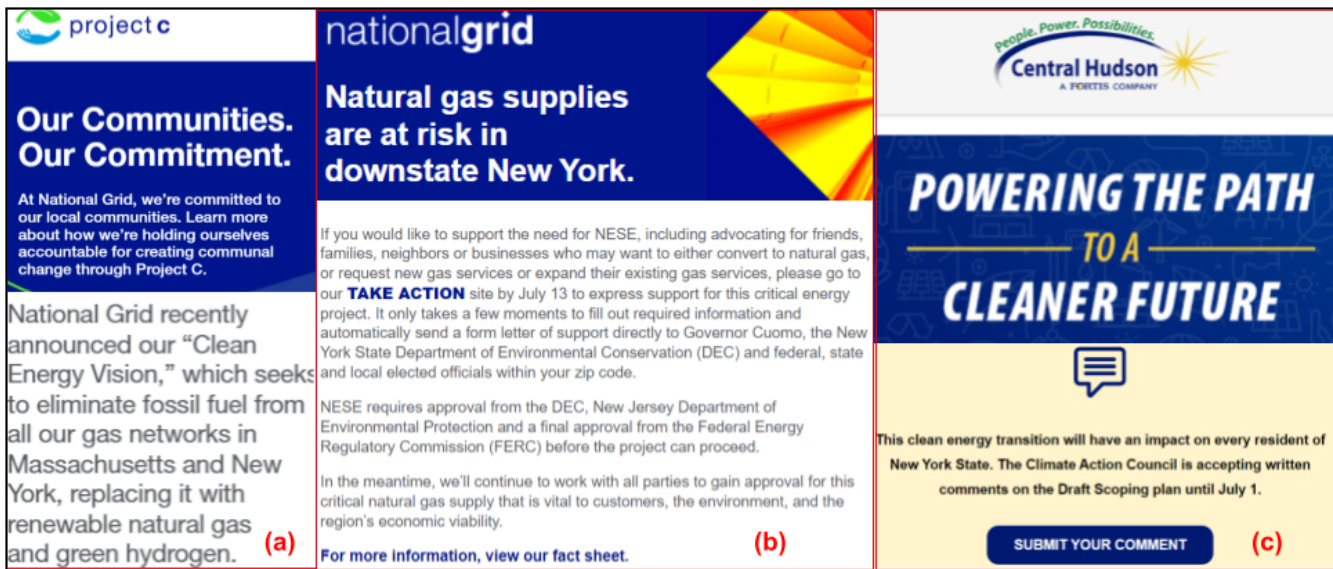


Figure 6: Parts of emails from National Grid and Central Hudson to their customers. (a) National Grid greenwashing and promoting false solutions such as RNG and Hydrogen through a so-called “Project C.” (b) National Grid using their customers to muster support for a pipeline project with no long-term necessity or financial viability or impact on existing customers. (c) Central Hudson feeding talking points (not in image) to its customers and asking them to comment on the Climate Action Council’s draft scoping plan.

National Grid flouts laws, rules, and regulations with impunity (Figure 7). National Grid has also encouraged the union bosses at [IBEW to rail against electrification](#) using the same debunked talking points that are featured in almost all disinformation campaigns covered in this document. IBEW is the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, who would actually benefit from electrification.

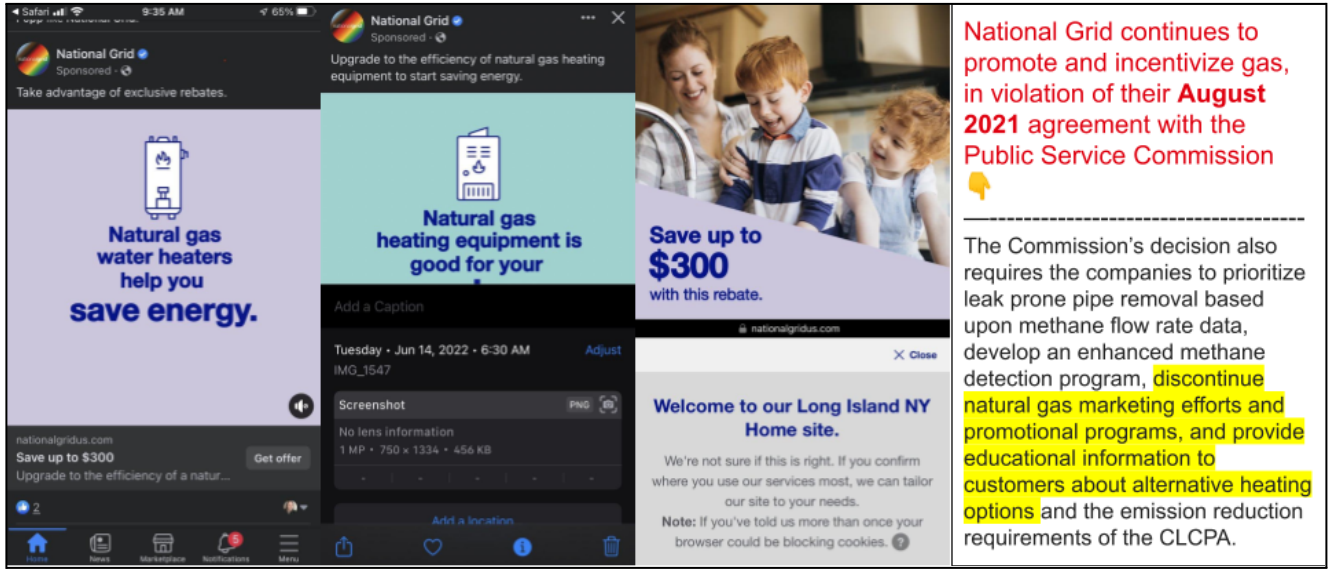
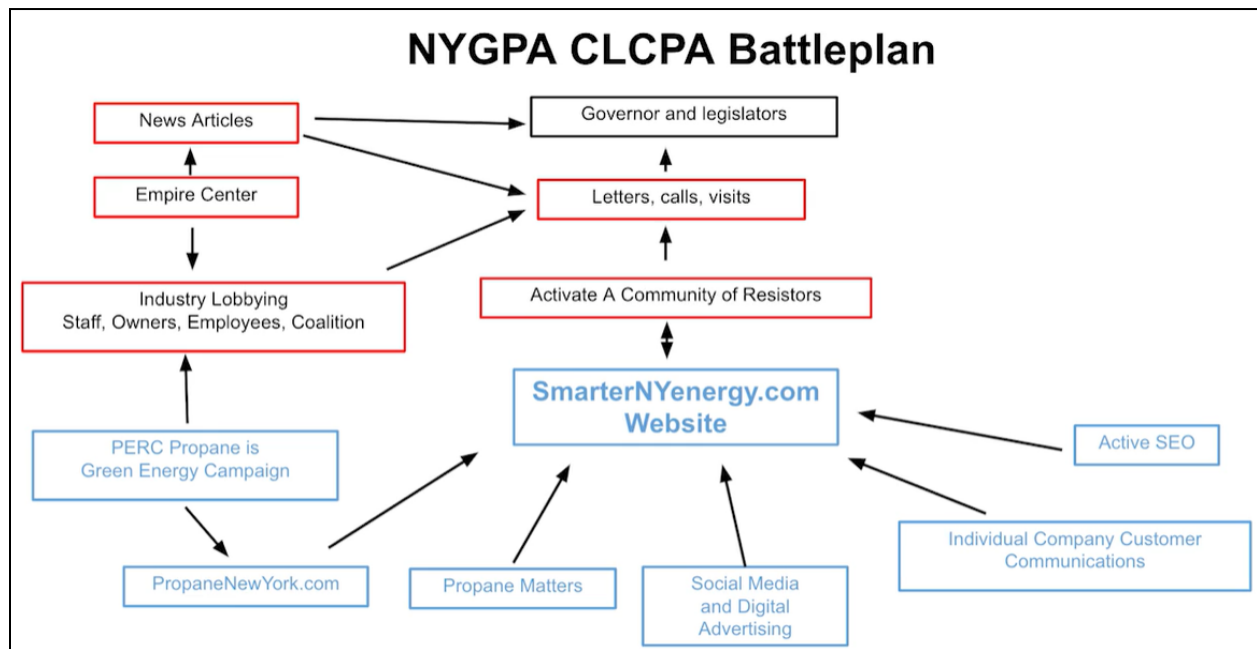
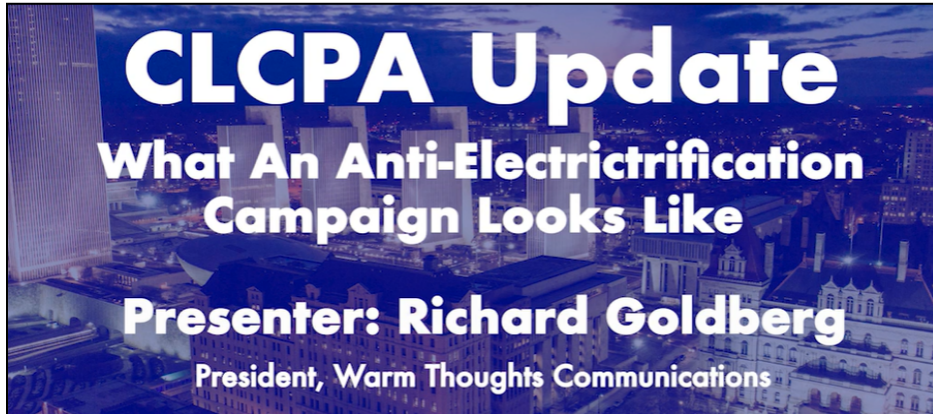


Figure 7: Facebook ads from National Grid in violation to their [August 2021 rate agreement](#) with the PSC.

5. New York Propane Gas Association


During their Fall 2021 conference, the New York Propane Gas Association laid out their strategy for fighting the CLCPA, in particular, the electrification that would be required to decarbonize New York’s building sector. The details of this strategy can be found in this [🔥astounding video🔥](#)! Key clips (like

this one [targeting down-state legislators and women](#)) from the video can be [viewed here](#). Some screenshots from the video that highlight the key aspects of their anti-CLCPA strategy are included below.



GET THE MESSAGE OUT

- Use PERC assets- including digital advertising campaign about propane’s role in decarbonization
- Create mini-sites like [StopNYcarbontax.com](#) to generate letters
- Create a new website/ facebook page- [SmarterNYenergy.org](#) that will be the foundation of our anti- “electrify everything” “efforts”
- Ask NYPGA members to amplify our message



Propane Matters is activating our customers

91 Companies will be distributing **202,000** copies to customers this fall!

This increased from 87 companies sending 174,000 in spring, and 81 companies sending 147,000 last fall

1. GET THE MESSAGE OUT

- NYPGA will provide free copies of Propane Matters twice this year
- NYPGA will run an ambitious on line ad campaign leveraging social media, digital advertising and traditional media


Referral Traffic
See what a little link can do.
Big thanks to the following companies:

Referrer	Sessions
Bottini Fuel	778
Combined Energy Services	392
Swezey Fuel	202
Valley Oil	181
Economy Oil	159
Kimlin Energy	104

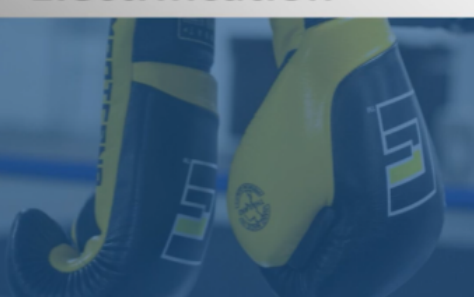
Part of an actual email from Bottini Fuel to a customer

New York's Energy Plans Could Prove Disastrous
Comment by June 10th

Go to SmarterNYEnergy.org to learn more.
If you agree these plans need revision, click on the **TAKE ACTION** button to make your voice heard.



We are ready to move to Phase 2: Anti- Electrification



We've generated 2,000 letters so far to 171 legislators and the Governor(s)

↑

This was in late 2021. The pace of feeding disinformation to citizens as well as legislators picked up in 2022, and multiple shadow groups, such as **"New Yorkers for Affordable Energy"** funded by **American Petroleum Institute, National Grid, Central Hudson, NYSEG** etc., got involved with the similar messaging, thus reinforcing the false narratives.

In his [presentation](#) at the NYPGA Fall 2021 conference, Richard Goldberg, the CEO of [Warm Thoughts Communications](#), a fossil-fuel PR firm, describes in excruciating detail how the fuel-oil industry in New Jersey is (successfully) fighting electrification there. He cites \$1.2 million of fundraising in New Jersey in 2021, and asserts that they will need to raise and spend a lot more in New York because it's bigger. They have done thorough research on their messaging and have figured out which falsehoods resonate best with voters and legislators. Their research also showed that [women were more likely to shift their position](#) than men, which is why women are featured prominently in their campaigns. They are learning from their campaigns in New Jersey, and are planning/executing similar campaigns in New York. [Key clips and full videos of Richard Goldberg's and others' presentations can be found here.](#)

Please indicate whether the following statements raise major doubts... in your mind about the part of the Energy Master Plan to switch homeowners from heating oil, propane and natural gas to electricity and heat pumps.

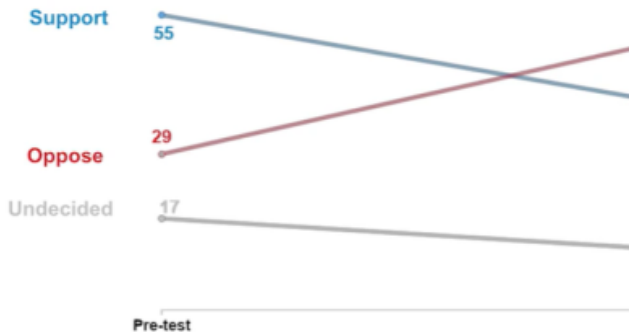
Total	Swing	% raises major doubts	Statement
53	61	[EXPENSIVE]	The Energy Master Plan will force New Jersey homeowners to switch to electric heat pumps, which could cost upwards of \$20,000 or more.
53	61	[INEQUITABLE]	Forcing homeowners to spend thousands of dollars to switch to electric heat pumps will either pay as homeowners or through increases in rent if they are renters.
48	55	[INEFFECTIVE]	The plan will force homeowners to switch to heat pumps, which are ineffective in cold temperatures and require supplemental heat, which is very expensive.
47	51	[ELECTRICITY USAGE - DISRUPTIVE]	The electric grid in New Jersey is not strong enough to support the addition of electric heat pumps, businesses and cars to electricity will increase power outages, especially during winter months.
47	51	[OVERBURDENED GENERALLY]	New Jersey residents are among the most heavily regulated and costly burdens that residents and businesses just cannot afford.
46	52	[ELECTRICITY USAGE - EXPENSIVE]	By effectively forcing New Jersey homeowners to use electricity instead of natural gas or heating oil, the Energy Master Plan will significantly increase electricity usage and require substantial investment in electric infrastructure, which will result in much higher electricity costs for homeowners, renters and businesses in New Jersey.
45	47	[ELECTRICITY USAGE - NON GREEN]	By forcing New Jersey homeowners to use electricity instead of natural gas or heating oil, the Energy Master Plan will significantly increase electricity usage, which may result in the importing of power generated out of state by fossil fuels.
43	47	[AFFECT ABILITY TO SELL]	The plan may require that fossil fuel systems be removed upon the sale of the house, which may make it difficult for existing homeowners to sell their homes because it would be a huge burden for the new homeowner.
43	47	[NO REPRESENTATION]	The Energy Master Plan is being created by the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities, but the state legislature, who should be representing the voice of the people, has no say in the part of the plan that will be forcing homeowners to adopt electric heat pumps. On this current plan, the legislature is not allowed to vote on it or change it in response to citizens' wishes.

False talking points, fed to legislative offices

Warm Thoughts conducted a 600-person statewide voter poll to guide our messaging strategy

We've generated 2,000 letters so far to 171 legislators and the Governor(s)

The Right Messaging Dramatically Reduced Support for Elimination of Oil, Propane and Natural gas from homes



Campaign Fundraising to Date

\$600,000 raised from marketers for the effort.
Another \$600,000 was added from the FMA rainy day fund.

Digital Advertising



Digital Advertising

Digital display ads targeted to legislative districts and focusing on key demographics.



Billboards

\$20,000 to convert to electric heat pumps?
THAT'S A BIG GAMBLE.

SmartHeatNJ.com
Brought to you by the Fuel Merchants Association of New Jersey

SMARTHEATNJ
Affordable. Sustainable. Achievable.

Public Relations and Earned Media

David Wildstein @wildstein · Sep 5

This is the weekend politics takes to the air along the Jersey Shore: SmartHeatNJ launches new campaign opposing the cost of @GovMurphy's Energy Master Plan.

STOP NJ GOV. HOPE HEAT TAX SMARTHEATNJ.COM

NEW JERSEY MONITOR

GOV + LEGISLATURE | CRIMINAL JUSTICE | POLITICS | SCHOOLS | BUSINESS | SOCIAL JUSTICE

Growing chorus of critics want to hit the brakes on N.J. electric heating mandate

BY ANNE BERTHIAUX | SEPTEMBER 5, 2022 | 7:00 AM

A provision in the state's energy master plan has critics clamoring for change.

The Fuel Merchants Association of New Jersey has launched a campaign seeking to head off portions of the state's energy master plan that would require ubiquitous use of electric heating systems, charging they will cost households several times more than predicted while still proving unreliable in cold weather.

The master plan estimates the costs of installing an electric heating system as falling between \$4,000 and \$7,000, but a study conducted by the Massachusetts-based biofuels firm Diversified Energy Specialists commissioned by the Fuel Merchants Association that examined installation costs found the average identification cost ranges from \$12,000 and \$22,000, with costs for new homes and grand buildings falling on the low end.

Branded Digital Content

USA TODAY
STATEMENT: STATEMENTS
Trailblazers to know
EVERYTHING TO KNOW
25 scary films to watch
SUPPLY CHAIN NEWS
Grocery shortages

SmartHeatNJ
Paid for by Fuel Merchants Association

New Jersey's Energy Master Plan will cost families thousands
Rebecca Gold, for Smart Heat New Jersey

Total Conversion: \$20,000+	Partial Conversion: \$4,000-\$7,000	Keeping Your Current System: \$0
According to analysis conducted by Diversified Energy Specialists, "the average cost to convert an existing home (with an average size of less than 1,700 square feet) to a whole-home electric heat pump system is \$20,000 and 93% of those homeowners kept their existing heating system as back-up."	Homeowners can expect to incur this cost if they are looking to add space heating or cooling to a couple of rooms in their home. This cost would require that the existing heating system remains in place in order to continue to heat and cool the entire home.	As natural gas and heating oil become renewable, clean energy goals can be achieved without the added cost to homeowners of a whole-home conversion.

The hidden strains on the electric grid
The electric grid in New Jersey may suffer if electric demand spikes as a result of electric heat pump conversions.

Currently, peak demand for electricity occurs during the summer. Relying on electric heat for winter heating would shift demand to the wintertime and likely create an environment where power outages are even more common.

We Need All of Us to be "All In"



- **Engage your customer base and employees**
 - Send Propane Matters
 - Email your customers
 - Put links on your home page
 - Share our Facebook posts
 - Get your employees to send letters through our website
 - Talk to local officials and local media
- **We need you to donate to the battle fund**
 - There are legal limits to how much Perc can help us financially, and there are practical limits to what we can do from our budget

As seen in the images above, NYPGA and their allies are ready to “take their gloves off” to fight electrification and the CLCPA, for which they even have a [battle fund](#). Part of their strategy is to rebrand propane as a “green” fuel; something they learned from the AGA! Here’s another video of a [PERC](#) director, describing their gaslighting scheme in another [remarkable video](#).



6. Smarter New York Energy

The website and Facebook page that Warmthoughts Communications and NYPGA refer to above is called [Smarter New York Energy](#). Currently, the primary aim of Smarter New York Energy is to generate as many comments on New York’s [Climate Action Council](#)’s draft [scoping plan](#) as possible, to oppose the CLCPA. In addition to digital advertising on [Facebook](#), YouTube, and other platforms, the site is being promoted by various fossil fuel businesses all across the state, such as propane dealers (see customer email from Bottini Fuel in the images above) and even gas stations (see **Figure 9** and the linked video clip). Clicking on their ads or the link in the emails takes the targeted individual to their website that sends an email to scopingplan@nyscrda.ny.gov with a pre-drafted comment opposing the CLCPA.

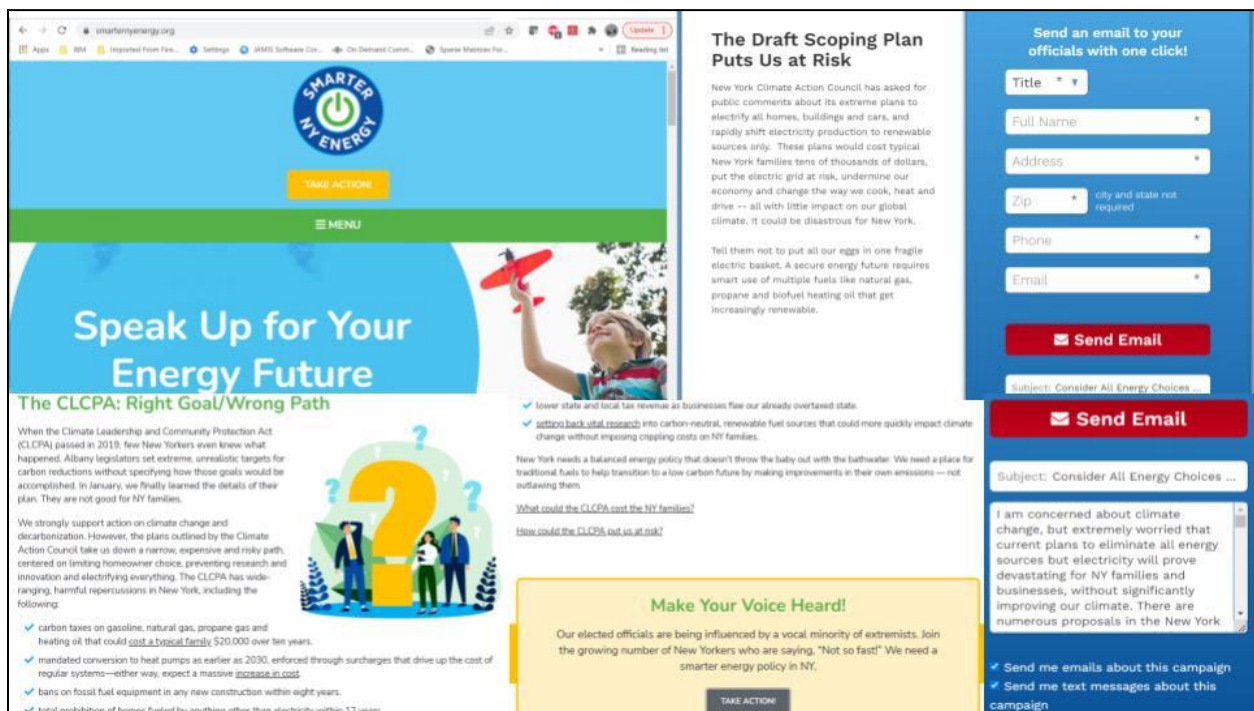


Figure 8: Some images and a form letter with an anti-CLCPA campaign full of falsehoods and scaremongering from the anonymous website [smarternyenergy.org](#).



Figure 9: A video that plays on the screen of a pump at [this Mirabito Station](#) as the customer fuels (left), and part of an email sent by [Petro Home Services](#) to its customers.

7. The American Petroleum Institute & Energy Citizens

The [American Petroleum Institute](#) (API) is the largest and the most nefarious trade association of the oil and gas industry whose key goal is to stymie efforts to address climate change. API achieves this through direct lobbying via their own army of lobbyists and lawyers at the federal and state levels, as well as through direct reach to citizens via a front group called [Energy Citizens](#) that they set up to fight climate action. Until a few years ago, it used to spread disinformation around climate change itself, claiming that there is no such thing as human-caused climate change that scientists agree upon. During the last few years, as almost everyone can directly observe the impacts of climate change around them, API shifted its strategy to discrediting climate solutions from discrediting climate science. Let's make no mistake that this change in messaging in no way represents a change in the hearts and minds of API's leadership, which stays committed to shoving dirty, expensive, volatile oil and gas down the throats of Americans.

In March 2022, [Energy Citizens launched an attack](#) on New York's legislative efforts around building-electrification. Like all their campaigns, this one too relies on lies and fear-mongering and prompts citizens to send an automated email to their NY State representatives opposing bans on gas hook-ups in new buildings. Screenshots in **Figure 10** give a glimpse of their [campaign](#) in NY, which was pulled back when the State's legislative session came to an end in early June. API/Energy Citizens had launched a vigorous mail (**Figure 11**) and social media campaign, which is now inactive, but included at least a dozen different [Facebook ads](#) (**Figure 12**) at its height in the Spring of 2022 with a weekly budget of nearly \$50,000. They have now moved on to exploiting the tragic events in Ukraine to build public pressure on the Biden administration to expand oil and gas extraction and to build pipelines and liquified natural gas (LNG) export terminals.

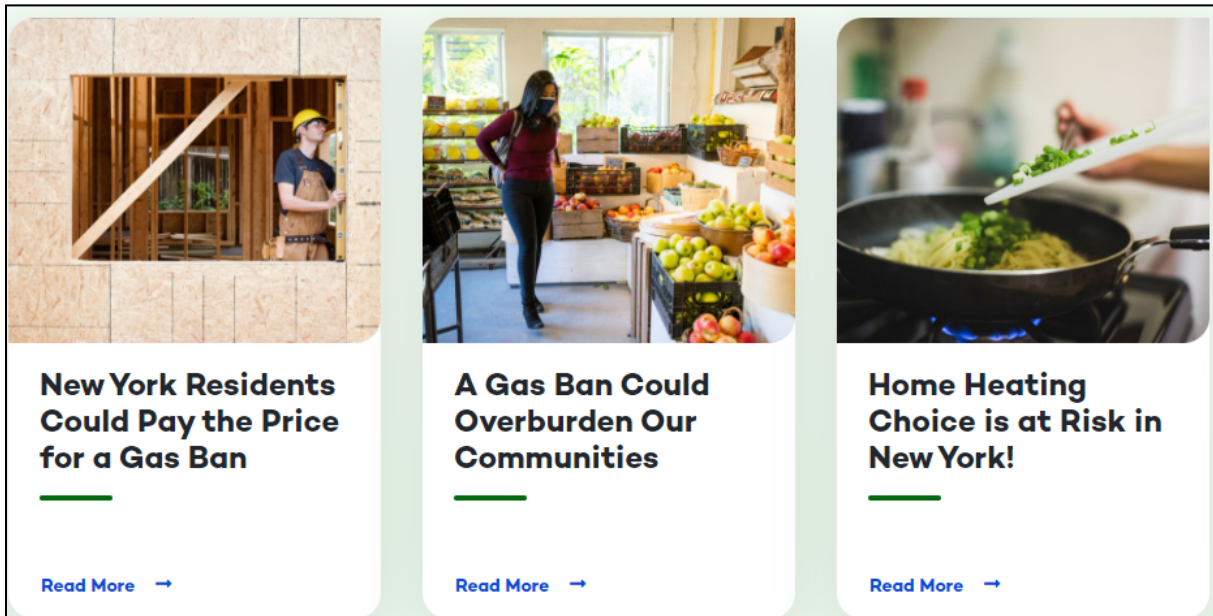


Figure 10: API propaganda aimed at defeating the All-Electric Building Act in NY State’s FY’23 budget.

A Natural Gas Ban Means Less Consumer Choice For New Yorkers

Gov. Hochul and New York legislators are considering a ban on natural gas

FEWER CHOICES

A Gas Ban On New Construction Could...

- Increase the cost of living
- Result in higher housing prices
- Fewer choices for many New Yorkers
- More building delays due to installation of heat pumps

A ban leaves consumers without options and vulnerable to price fluctuations

Don't Let Governor Hochul And New York Legislators Limit Your Choices

Contact your legislator now!

Scan QR code to make your voice heard!

www.energycitizens.org/fightthegashan

- Why would avoiding the cost of piping, plumbing, radiators etc. increase housing cost?
- Shouldn't a single system for both heating & cooling reduce cost, complexity, and maintenance?
- Fewer choices? Eliminating the poorest of choices is a good thing! Gas stoves can cause levels of indoor air pollution that would be illegal outdoors. This hits low/middle income families with smaller homes harder. Children growing up in homes with gas stoves have upto 42% higher asthma rates. And gas causes fires & explosions!
- Vulnerable to price fluctuations? That happens the most to oil and gas. Electrification reduces fluctuations because electricity's fuel sources are diversified and interchangeable.
- Cold Climate Heat pumps consume 1.5X to 4X less energy than oil/gas furnaces.

Figure 11: Image (debunked) of one of the mailers being sent by Energy Citizens/API to New Yorkers in key legislative districts during March-April, 2022.



Figure 12: Images from Energy Citizen's [Facebook campaign](#) opposing the All-Electric Building Act.

8. American Gas Association & American Public Gas Association

[American Gas Association](#) (AGA) and its cousin, the American Public Gas Association (APGA) are trade groups representing gas utilities. While their direct interference with climate legislation in New York has yet to be detected, they do a lot of [foundational work](#) on gas disinformation that the local utilities draw upon. In 2018, fearing imminent electrification pushes, APGA hired the elite PR firm Porter Novelli to promote gas, as shown in the images below. Porter Novelli's research found that homeowners have no preference for a fuel type for water and space heating; they would simply choose the less expensive option. However, they could be persuaded to develop loyalty to gas stoves.

Based on their and Porter Novelli's research, AGA and APGA launched a massive media and social media campaign promoting gas stoves, even though cooking accounts for less than 3% of household gas use. A detailed account of decades of gas promotion, including the recent campaigns, can be found in this captivating video: [It's Time To Break Up With Our Gas Stoves | Climate Town](#).

programs in development or under consideration. It will also work to develop content and utilize media channels designed to make the case to policymakers that the direct use of natural gas deserves an expanded role in providing our country's energy needs rather than being phased-out for the ostensibly urgent need to "save the planet" starting with "forced electrification" of our customers.

winning the communications war is essential to our survival as an economically viable segment of the energy industry going forward,

essential to develop a strategic effort to win this war. It is also important to understand, not only that the communications landscape has changed dramatically over the last 20 years, but it is likely to change at an accelerated pace over the next 20 years. We must be open to adopt new and flexibly responsive strategies and new tactics, and adapt to new media and new messaging.

It is useful to note at this point that all successful persuasive communications efforts require the appropriate mixture of the four essential elements of mass communications: **reach, frequency, media and message**. We must be willing to fundamentally rethink the "who, what, where, when, and how" we communicate with the various audiences we wish to engage.

10:29 / 21:27



Figure 13: An excerpt from an APGA letter from July 2018 describing the need for and Porter Novelli's role in a public disinformation campaign to promote fossil gas.

AGA Goal & Strategy

- **Goal**
To keep natural gas an integral part of a clean energy future by reframing the debate on the value proposition of natural gas and our infrastructure.
- **Strategy**
AGA has created an interdepartmental team to leverage existing resources and build new initiatives to address these challenges.

Proactive and Responsive

Changing the Narrative

AGA
American Gas Association

Figure 14: An excerpt from AGA's 2018 "[Speak up For Natural Gas](#)" advocacy training workshop.

Following the multi-year campaign to promote cooking with gas, AGA and APGA hired consulting firms to conduct unscientific surveys, whose results are quoted in various form letters in New York ([Section 9](#)) claiming that 70% Americans prefer cooking with gas. For example, the ads shown in [Figure 16](#) exhort Facebook users to share their opinion on gas with enticing images of cooking with gas.



Figure 15: Examples of heavy nationwide gas promotions from 2018–2021.

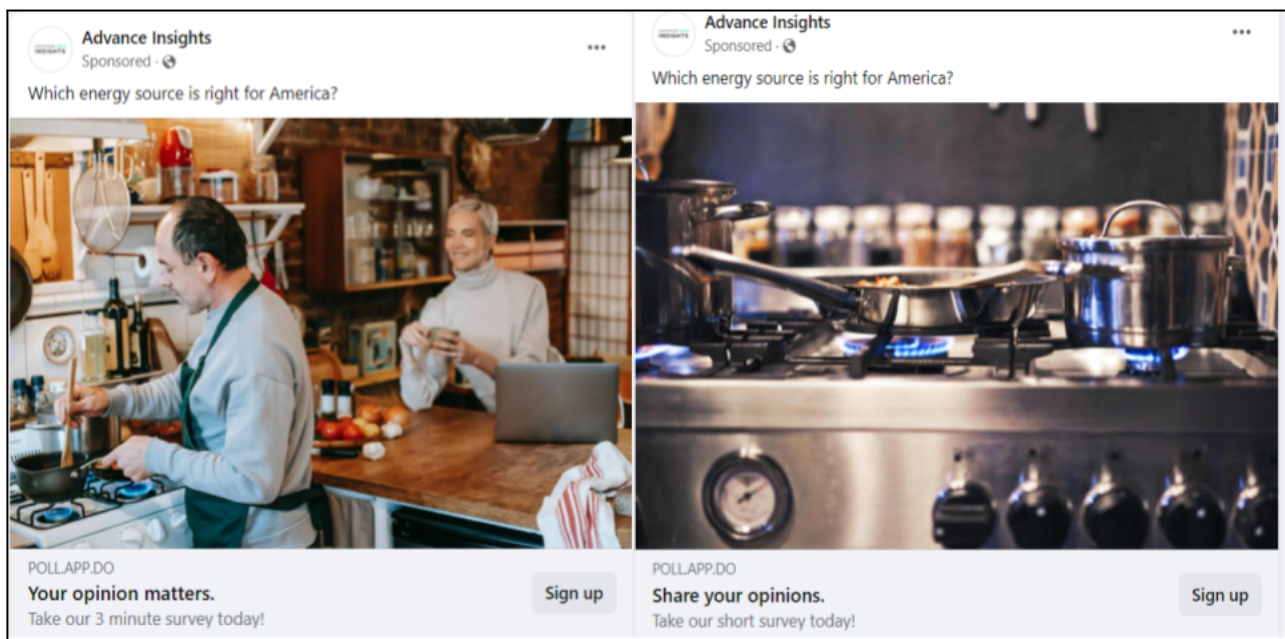


Figure 16: Facebook ads for surveys with enticing gas stove images.

Many gas utilities use AGA and APGA’s playbook to spread disinformation using ratepayer funds. As shown below, in January 2022, the United States’ largest gas utility was fined for exactly the actions that are detailed in this document. In New York State, it is the responsibility of the [Public Service Commission](#) that regulates gas utilities to track and prevent such misuse. As shown in **Figure 7**, the [PSC commissioners](#) in New York, some with past and current fossil-fuel and gas-utility associations, appear to be generally lax in enforcement.

“Between June 2018 and January 2021, the company used ratepayers’ funds — without their knowledge — to push back on energy efficiency standards for buildings, argue against electrification requirements, sow doubt about the connection between gas appliances and indoor air pollution, and fund industry advocacy groups.”



In addition to promoting the use of fossil gas, AGA also promotes false solutions such as Renewable Natural Gas (RNG). Talk of a mostly fictitious future gas system piping RNG blended with hydrogen instead of fossil gas gives gas and pipeline companies an excuse to keep expanding their cash cow, the gas infrastructure, gives political cover to their legislative allies, and as shown in **Figure 17**, helps soften public opposition to gas. As described in [Section 4](#), this is a huge part of National Grid’s strategy to keep gas infrastructure and sales alive until climate doomsday.

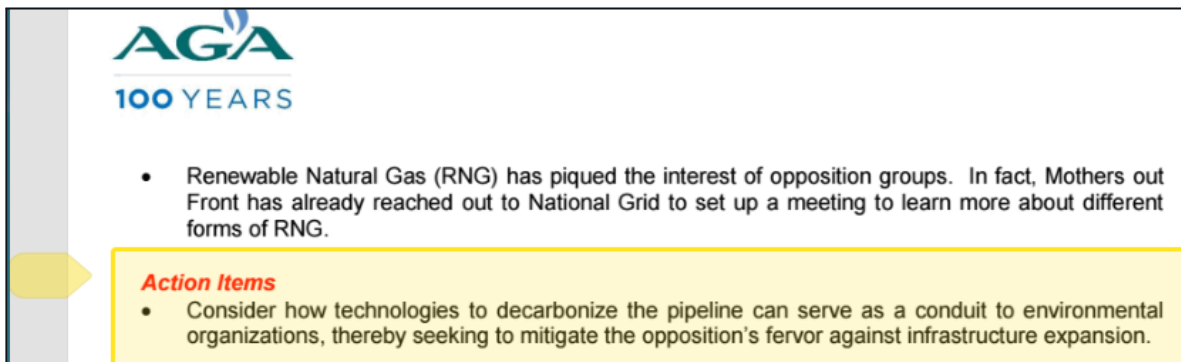


Figure 17: AGA is also [pushing false solutions](#) such as RNG.

9. NYS Association of Plumbing, Heating, Cooling Contractors

During the 2021-22 legislative session, NY State legislators started receiving hundreds of form letters claiming, among other falsehoods, that 70% of Americans prefer gas stoves, the fragile grid cannot handle building electrification and is anyway powered by fossil fuels, etc. Many campaigns described in this document use similar talking points and a similar playbook. One such letter was created and promoted by the NY State Association of Plumbing, Heating, Cooling Contractors, which is also a member of the front group New Yorkers for Affordable Energy ([Section 2](#)). This letter doesn’t cite a source for the percentage of Americans that it claims love their gas stoves, but we suspect that it is a survey of the type shown in **Figure 16**. Note that the multiyear gas-cooking promotions described in

Section 8 were aimed precisely at using Americans’ so-called preference for gas stoves to obstruct climate legislation aimed at curtailing the use of fossil gas for water and space heating. Below, we display the entire content of the letter and debunk the misleading and false claims in it.

Tell New York State Legislators: Oppose Bans on Natural Gas

Dear Members of the plumbing and HVAC trades:

Legislation has been introduced in the New York State Senate and Assembly that targets for elimination a critical skillset of the plumbing and HVAC trades. Senate Bill 6843A and companion legislation Assembly Bill 8431 will prohibit natural gas installations in all new construction beginning in 2023.

The effort to eliminate the use of natural gas is part of a broader vision by environmentalists to shift the energy grid to 100% electricity powered by a combination of windmills, solar farms, renewable energy and nuclear power. The goal is to achieve a carbon-free energy grid by 2035, and zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

While there is little doubt plumbing and HVAC contractors will be negatively impacted by this effort to eliminate natural gas, our customers will bear the brunt of this effort. It risks putting undue stress on electric grids as households shift to 100% electricity, limits consumer choice for their energy needs, and increases costs for consumers by forcing them to retrofit their homes with costly new equipment.

It doesn't have to be that way. Contact your state legislators and Governor Hochul, and tell them that you support consumer choice and a diversified energy portfolio that includes the use of clean burning natural gas. Natural gas is not just an industry preference; 70% of Americans including New Yorkers prefer natural gas to heat their homes, cook their food, and save money on energy bills in a state where electricity rates are some of the highest in the country.

Submit your contact information in the fields on the right of your screen, and urge your representatives in Albany to support consumer choice by opposing Senate Bill 6843A and Assembly Bill 8431.

Oppose S6843A and A8431

Tell Your Legislators: Protect Consumer Energy Choice

Send me email updates and quick actions I can take to help!

[Next](#)

Help us reach our goal! 253 / 100 messages sent

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Figure 18: The source of one of the letters that NYS legislators received during the 2021-22 legislative session.

Oppose S6843A and A8431

Contact your legislators.

Susan J. Serino (R)
State Senator (NY)

Kevin A. Cahill (D)
State Representative (NY)

Email Subject

Email Body

As a plumbing and HVAC contractor, I am urging you to oppose Senate Bill 6843A and companion legislation Assembly Bill 8431. This legislation seeks to eliminate natural gas installations in new construction. I stand with the majority of New Yorkers that support the continued use of natural gas to heat their homes and power their appliances while keeping energy costs low.

There is a trend occurring in cities across the country, including right here in New York where municipal governments are proposing policies that would prohibit the installation of natural gas in new construction, with plans to eventually eliminate the use of natural gas altogether in order to achieve zero carbon emissions by the next decade.

The claim in the letter that a majority of New Yorkers support the continued use of gas to heat their homes and other appliances is false. For space and water heating, most consumers are only concerned about the cost and have no preference for a specific fuel. With [efficient heat pumps](#) and escalating gas prices, gas is no longer the cheaper alternative in most of New York. A majority of New Yorkers favor immediate, meaningful climate action.

<p>We are concerned about the capacity of the electric grid to handle a sudden spike in demand, even when supplemented by renewable energy, that will stress infrastructure and cause blackouts. With natural gas infrastructure eventually phased out as part of decarbonizing the energy grid, it will be extremely difficult to reengage the natural gas network as an energy supplement to reduce demand for electricity in order to stabilize the grid.</p>	<p>Furthermore, 70% of Americans prefer natural gas appliances to cook their food and heat their homes. It's often much more effective than electric heat pumps, especially in the American northeast where winters can be brutal, and it is much less energy intensive. Natural gas furnaces are affordable and do not require additional modifications to a home's electric wiring, thereby keeping real estate costs low and making homes a little less expensive. Businesses, especially restaurants, would also be able to keep their prices lower because of lower electricity costs.</p>
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This is categorically incorrect. These bills apply to new construction only, and the grid will easily be able to adapt to the gradual electrification over the next two-three decades. For example, at one point, there were hardly any air conditioners on the grid. Within two-three decades, from the 1950s to 1970s, central air conditioners became standard in the US. Even with the old grid technology of the 1960s, the grid worked just fine! Also, recall that [Con Edison](#) and [LIPA](#) support electrification of new construction, allaying any fears about the grid. A more detailed analysis [can be found here](#).

The 70% number quoted here has no credible source. Gas is not at all less energy intensive than heat pumps; cold climate air source and ground source heat pumps can effectively provide space heating anywhere in New York. In new construction, natural gas furnaces are less affordable because they need to be paired with air conditioning for a complete HVAC system; heat pumps are capable of both heating and cooling with a single system. The point about modifications to wiring is completely bogus; in fact, an all-electric construction would save money by avoiding the need for a gas plumbing system.

As far as restaurants are concerned, the vastly more efficient induction cooktops will keep energy costs low. Additionally, chefs who have switched to induction rave about how much cooler and more comfortable the restaurant's kitchen is without gas burners (not to mention deadly indoor pollution from gas). So induction cooking saves on air conditioning costs as well.

<p>Plumbing and HVAC contractors are conservationists by trade. We play a role in ensuring clean water for consumption and clean indoor air, and ensuring those valuable resources are free of contaminants and efficiently provided with minimal impact on the environment. It is because we take our stewardship of the environment seriously that we are concerned with a sudden shift away from natural gas as a power source in favor of full electrification.</p>	<p>We urge you to reconsider any electrification policies in favor of a plan that seeks to improve environmental quality through more efficient use of our current energy portfolio while preserving energy choice for New Yorkers. Thank you.</p>
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Here, the form letter makes vague claims that the letter writers are conservationists, but makes no reference to climate change. The letter also urges the legislators to meet the environmental goals with the current energy portfolio. It is impossible to make any progress towards any reasonable climate goals with an energy portfolio that includes fossil fuels such as methane, which is exceedingly dangerous because of its own massive warming potential when it inevitably leaks, and because of the warming it causes from CO2 emissions when it burns.

Additionally, indoor gas combustion is a respiratory and cardiac health risk, causes asthma among children, and is a safety hazard that results in frequent fires and explosions.

10. Social media disinformation by recruited trolls

A small group of the same individuals can often be found posting comments like the one below on multiple social media platforms, and on multiple pages on each platform.

This seemingly convincing technical comment posted on Gov. Hochul's campaign FaceBook page is **completely false** because (1) It points to the US national average, not New York, where it has been shown that electrification reduces emissions based on the current [fuel-mix in NY electricity supply](#) and planned near-term sources. (2) The direct conversion between BTU and KWh is bogus because heat pumps move energy and yield heat equivalent to 1.5–4 KWh for each KWh of grid electricity consumed.



Dan Smyntek

You now, furthermore, more CO2 is generated using electricity than the equivalent energy from NG (at this time).

(From 2020) the CO2 emissions of 1KWh of electricity is about .85 lb. Since it takes over 26 KW/h to equal the BTU energy of 1 CCF of gas...

The math tells us electrical generation of 26KW/h is 22.1 lbs of CO2 per 1 CCF. 1 CCF of NG creates 11.7 lb of CO2.

So using electricity creates almost twice the carbon output from generation of it, as burning NG directly.

(2020 Source:

<https://www.eia.gov/tools/faqs/faq.php?id=74&t=11...>)

(Energy Unit Conversion:

<https://learnmetrics.com/is-gas-or-electric-cheaper/>)

As shown in [this video](#), and in AGA's [training material](#), part of AGA's playbook is for the gas companies to ask their own employees to post disinformation on social media. That seems to be the case here with someone who has been handed this script to post.

11. New York State Senators & Assembly Members

Much of the disinformation described in this document is aimed at lawmakers and policy makers, either directly, or through influencing public opinion and using ordinary citizens as tools for servicing the financial objectives of the fossil fuel industry. However, not all lawmakers are targets. It should come as no surprise that many lawmakers are passively complicit, and some are even active participants. This section focuses on the latter.

Figure 19 shows examples of some NYS senators exhorting constituents to comment on the scoping plan while exposing them to disinformation with varying levels of subtlety. For example, one senator's tweet has a link to an [article in the Niagara Gazette](#) that incorrectly claims that the cost of replacing a heat pump system for both heating and cooling would be two to three times higher than the combined

total cost of an equivalent furnace and air conditioner. Even if currently true, which it's not, it is misleading to use current prices of heat pumps for a comparison that's likely not relevant for a decade when, like any emerging technology, the heat pump costs will decline due to greater adoption, higher volumes, and more trained and experienced workforce. The other examples in the figure at least qualify as fear-mongering, if not downright disinformation.

The figure consists of three distinct screenshots:

- Top Left:** A tweet from Rob Ortt (@SenatorOrtt) stating: "The public comment period on the CAC's Draft Scoping Plan is coming to an end this week. If you have not made your voice heard and submitted a comment, now is your chance." Below the tweet is a link: ow.ly/McxR50JJE0x. A red box highlights another link: ow.ly/38E150JJE0y.
- Top Right:** A snippet from the Niagara Gazette website. The text reads: "About buildings: 'By the end of this decade, the expectation is that two million homes will become electrified with electric heat pumps, starting with Disadvantaged Communities first, followed by 250,000 homes each year after 2030. As of today, it is estimated a heat pump will cost single family home owners two to three times the rate to install when compared to furnace/air conditioning replacement.'" A red arrow points from the highlighted link in the tweet to this text.
- Bottom:** An email from Senator Patrick M. Gallivan. The header includes his name and title: "New York State Senator PATRICK M. GALLIVAN (R, C, IP) 59TH SENATE DISTRICT". The body of the email addresses "Dear Neighbor," and discusses the Climate Action Council's Draft Scoping Plan. It lists several points:
 - No new gas service to existing buildings, beginning in 2024;
 - No natural gas within newly constructed buildings, beginning in 2024; beginning in 2030;
 - No gasoline-automobile sales by 2035;
 - Installing onsite solar or joining a community renewables program by 2040; and
 - Installing geothermal heating by 2040.
 The email concludes with: "Eliminating the use of natural gas, propane and heating oil will substantially increase the state's demand for electricity and prove costly for consumers and businesses."

Figure 19: A sampling of NYS senators urging constituents to oppose the scoping plan via social media, emails, and their own websites.

The figure consists of three screenshots:

- Left:** A video player interface showing a man speaking at a podium. A red box highlights his speech: "We should all be gathering together to push back, to do a 'public awareness' campaign." Below the video is a "Click to play video" button.
- Middle:** A slide from a Climate Action Council public hearing. The slide lists:
 - Doreen Harris, Chair, President & CEO, NYSERDA
 - Basil Seggos, Chair, Commissioner, Dept. of Environmental Conservation
 - Phil Palmesano
 A red box highlights the text: "Affordability & Reliability".
- Right:** A screenshot of a NYS Assembly hearing titled "ALL ELECTRIC BUILDINGS" on Thursday, May 12, 2022. The hearing is for "5-12-22 Public Hearing on All-Electric Buildings". A red box highlights the text: "Affordability & Reliability".

Figure 20: The ranking member of the NYS Assembly Energy Committee speaking at the [NYPGA Fall 2021 conference](#), during a Climate Action Council [public hearing](#), and at the NYS Assembly [hearing on all electric buildings](#).

The video clip in **Figure 20** shows NYS Assembly’s ranking member of the [Standing Committee on Energy](#) almost appearing to collude with the New York Propane Gas Association ([Section 5](#)) to push back on the CLCPA. It is also remarkable coordination that the ranking member and the National Grid executive ([Section 4](#)) repeatedly use similar phrasing, likely because raising concerns around costs and reliability are the most effective scare tactics for turning public opinion against climate action.

12. “Natural Allies” to appeal to black and latino voters

[Natural Allies](#) is a relatively new industry PR group that targets young liberal voters of color in the northeast, particularly New York and New Jersey, with explicitly false advertising that suggests that fossil gas is not only clean, but is the fuel of the future. This group is led by Williams, which is also a key player in the astroturfing entity New Yorkers for Affordable Energy ([Section 2](#)). **Figure 21** shows an ad, featuring children, that made rounds in New York and New Jersey during Earth Month 2022. It claimed that fracked methane, which leaks through the entire “natural” gas infrastructure from extraction to transportation to distribution to appliances and is a 85X more potent greenhouse gas near-term than carbon dioxide, is accelerating our clean energy future! Their ad for the Black History Month is also interesting (see caption on the right in **Figure 21**)

The image shows a screenshot of a Politico article. At the top left, there is a green and yellow graphic with the text: "NATURAL GAS IS ACCELERATING OUR CLEAN ENERGY FUTURE. LEARN MORE". Below this is a photograph of two children wearing helmets, one pink and one purple, sitting on a grassy area. A small red box highlights a logo in the bottom left of the photo: "NATURAL ALLIES FOR A CLEAN ENERGY FUTURE. Paid for by Natural Allies, Inc." To the right of the photo is a section titled "How the gas industry aims to rebrand as 'clean' energy to appeal to Black and Latino voters" with "The Guardian" logo. Below this is a "Black History Month: REMEMBERING ALICE H. PARKER" section featuring a portrait of a white woman. A caption below the portrait reads: "For Black History Month, Natural Allies posted about Alice Parker, a Black inventor. The image here, however, appears to be of an unrelated white woman by the same name. Online tributes to Alice Parker commonly use an image of a white woman by the same name, or sometimes entirely different Black inventors, according to the Energy News Network. Photograph: Natural Allies for a Clean Energy Future". At the bottom of the screenshot, the Politico logo and "Weekly NY & NJ Energy" are visible, along with the byline "BY RY RIVARD AND MARIE J. FRENCH" and a purple box containing "Presented by Natural Allies for a Clean Energy Future".

Figure 21: Some ads by the industry PR group Natural Allies to promote fossil gas.

13. Concluding remarks

This document catalogs many elements of the absolutely insidious and well-coordinated campaign by the fossil fuel industry and its shills working feverishly to weaken, if not outright derail New York’s climate law.

This campaign is breathtaking in scope, magnitude and reach and is virtually inescapable by any New Yorker.

The Climate Action Council's work on the scoping plan is the result of an Herculean effort by its members following an equally Herculean effort by climate organizers, bill sponsors, and their staff that lead to the CLCPA being passed. We strongly urge the Council to stay steadfast in implementing the CLCPA's goals without delay or dilution, undeterred by the lies and intimidation by the fossil-fuel industry and its accessories, while staying mindful that a substantial portion of the opposition to the scoping plan is likely to have been coaxed from unsuspecting New Yorkers by self-serving actors using fear and disinformation, using the recent spike in energy prices to amplify their message.

This document also highlights the fact that a public information and engagement effort rivaling the scope and magnitude of the disinformation campaigns is absolutely critical for the success of the CLCPA.

14. How to access this information?

If you have a printed copy of this document, then you can scan the QR code below to access an on-line version with live links to the sources and related content, which is also available at bit.ly/GaslightNY.

