



LAWLER – ZELDIN MEET WITH LOCAL LEADERS TO DISCUSS ENERGY

BY: Keith S. Shikowitz, Editor in Chief/Investigative Reporter

Congressman Mike Lawler's non-stop jaunt around the district brought him back to Orangetown on October 18, 2026. This time he had EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin with him to discuss the issue of energy policy with local business and political leaders.



Zeldin & Lawler

"Good morning. Thank you for being here. It's great to have Administrator Zeldin, here again in Rockland County, and focused on the issue of energy policy, especially here in the State of New York where utility rates are up 58% over the last 6 years under Kathy Hochul. In measure because they've shut down nuclear power, they've shut down natural gas extraction, they've blocked pipelines and frankly have made it as inhospitable place to increase energy supply and the rules and regs of the CLCPA, which the governor finally acknowledged is problematic." Lawler opened.

He continued, "You know, it has, it has been very difficult. It's killed good paying union jobs, stifled economic development and growth, made it harder for manufacturing to come back even when they tout things like Micron. You see Micron expanding in Idaho. It's cheaper, cleaner, and more reliable, for energy there. So, the EPA obviously can play a vital role along with the Department of Interior, the Department of Energy. We're going to have. An announcement tomorrow with Secretary Wright, Secretary Burham up in Dutchess County. But having EPA Administrator Zeldin here today is a great opportunity to talk about these issues and so I wanted to turn it over to our great friend, Lee Zeldin.

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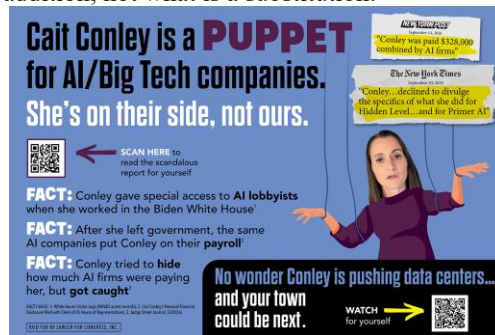
"Now I run the Environmental Protection Agency, let's talk about it for a quick second on the environmental standpoint. First off, as a country, we tap in our own energy supplies so much better than just about any other country around the world, so we should be proud of how we environmentally tap into our own resources."

"I was on the House Foreign Affairs Committee which Congressman Lawler sits on now, and this was my last two years, right after President Biden was sworn in. John Kerry was appointed as the climate czar of the White House, and he came to testify before the committee, and he was posed a question. This was not a trick question. This was a layup.

It was a simple and an important question presented as multiple choice, what is the safest way to transport energy in America? Truck, train, pipeline? It was a whole bunch of multiple-choice options he could have chosen anyone. He could have paused; he could have hedged. He could have given the positives and negatives of each without missing a beat, he says, pipeline." Zeldin stated.

So, what are we doing here? Why aren't we not just safely tapping into our own supplies and building more pipelines, especially here in New York for New Yorkers and through the rest of the country. Lastly I'll just tap into two quick points one, Indian Point closing. It's honestly a stupid policy that was implemented that lacks common sense that is filled with regret afterwards.

According to Zeldin, the way that we look at all sources of power, it's very important for us as a country to view what is reliable durable baseload power and have access to it as affordably as possible and what is an intermittent source and that an intermittent source is not a base load source an intermittent source is not a substitute for a base load source. While there might be a strong proponent for a wind project or a strong proponent for a solar project, it's important that we understand that we're talking about an intermittent source. The conversation should be about what is an addition, not what is a substitution.



"It starts to become a very slippery slope dangerous road to go down when we start talking about building a new wind and solar project as the substitute as we don't need any more baseload power because we're just going to build enough wind and solar. It doesn't work then I mentioned in my travels across this country going to all the states I'll tell you that there have been a lot of Democratic governors like when I'm in New Mexico or Colorado or elsewhere where they are explaining to me how much they understand that intermittent sources are not substitute for base load sources. This isn't a Conservative, Liberal Republican or Democrat this isn't a partisan viewpoint.

It's an almost universal understanding across this country except for New York. It's great to be with all of you."

I know we have, we have, some limited time here, but I want to start the conversation with, two of our labor leaders here, and just kind of get a sense from you guys on the impact these policies in New York have had, on your members, on, jobs, on the ability to build critical infrastructure projects and specifically energy, whether it was Dan Scammer power plant up in Newburgh that was blocked, or the pipelines that many of your members are involved in running. I'd just kind of like to get your thoughts, Steve Reich.

Reich stated, "Yeah, I mean, we, I mean, when I first started down here in Rockland, I was running the local. I think the last pipeline that was approved in New York was the AI pipeline, which, we were on from the beginning, and it was a hard pull and that was after they got rid of the Constitution and everything else, Not only the jobs that are created, the gas was here locally, but also down going down to New England, like you said. There was another section of that pipeline, another expansion that needed to be done, and this is all an existing runway. It's not a huge pull.

He continued saying that it's, being killed and just put out, especially at a certain time it was hurtful for him on a local level because of the people he represents ultimately. Rockland County is his territory and Rockland County only, he's a little bit insulated in terms of that, but in terms of the overall general aspect of it.

"I mean, everything was in place. All the money was spent. There's no reason why that shouldn't have gone forward and to have politics get in the way of policy that we need that energy right now, and you see they're pushing for it to come back, but it could have been operating right now, and just 1 more thing on top of that is like, if we all remember back a little ways, we had the old clean jet on the Hudson when they were going to operate bow line and not just make it a peaker and the capability, make it a more environmentally friendly, plant, because it was a closed loop system not drawing any water and sending it back to the river. That was actually going forward,

and then all of a sudden that was the energy highway whole thing and then all the financing of that got done.”

<https://youtu.be/G5b2haqsCP4>

When Reich was finished, Lawler pointed to his right at Dan Ortega. “Congressman, good morning and thank you for having us here, and appreciate having the administrator here too. The way you handle EPA has been amazing for labor and for all around, in a lot of places including somewhat our territories New York and New Jersey, so we get the pain from everywhere, on the work that we do. The thing about pipelines is for our members and it's a lot of work. It's these gold mines for our members that they're pulling in more money than they can ever put in during 1.5, to 2 years. There is almost unlimited overtime. We have members who move close to rent a studio apartment near the site just because it's easier and cheaper than to commute home every day because the amount of work that is available for them. I always tell people that these companies are not so much in the energy business as the transportation business. Their job is to move products from point A to point B so that the sooner they can do a job the better. In terms of the policy, to us it's not just only the jobs for the 1.5 to 2 years' worth of construction. To us it's also all of the consequences that come after having the available energy for the room.”

Ortega explained that this is now when companies are going to say, well, I can move to New York because the energy. States like New York and New Jersey are trying to attract companies that are high manufacturing companies, companies in research or companies. None of those companies are going are low energy producers or consumers. In order for a company like Johnson and Johnson to put in a lab that is going to find the next vaccine, Pfizer, to find the next, medication, you need a lot of energy and once these companies settle in a state like New York they're going to bring in lots of engineers. The amount of jobs that they bring in, these are not entry level jobs, these are high end professionals with PhDs with very high salaries.

He concluded, “This can be really good things for everybody all around if we have the right policy. Last thing, one of the things I always ask, people in economic development, both in government and people like me who are doing this, I always say to them, you know, at the end of the day what is it that New York wants to do when it grows up? Do we want to be a tourist attraction? If so then let's do that. Or do we want to be a leading state in different industries whether that is manufacturing, whether that is, you know, research and development, but let's fix what we want to do and let's pursue that. But let's also keep in mind that in order to achieve those things there's, there have to be better policies that are going to help us achieve that.”

<https://youtu.be/ciQNU1Z7KQI>

“I know we have some small business owners that are here as well and want to get their take on the impact frankly of these policies on their day-to-day operations we have Alice Lenna from New City Bowl and Batting and Al Ryan, from Ryan Printing, both at times I'm sure consume lots of energy, so I am curious on your take on how the increased utility rates have impacted your bottom line.”

Lenna started. “Badly. A lot of things at the state level really affect small business. This being, one of my most expensive costs. I own a bowling center. I did a little study. In 2023, my utility bill was about 3500 a month. Last year, about 5800. This year, unfortunately, I had some damage. I was closed for two months. If I just take the 9 months minus, if I took 9 months, which I was close to, so my electric costs, I'm not running the machines and right, it's still \$6300. I figured it out. I'm close to 80%. She's killing small businesses, and we're the backbone of the country. The policies, I think it's bad, you know, Indian Point closing. We didn't replace it with anything. I get my energy. I've been using the same company probably for like 20 years, and so I'm not that bad compared to other people that are probably buying it from O&R. They're going to put us out of business. Between that and the minimum wage for me which has gone up. Those are my two biggest expenses, payroll and energy. I pray every night for Bruce Blakeman.

Ryan was next. “My company is a 2nd generation printing company We're right down the street, and our electric bills now are topping \$20,000 a month. What so many other people were saying before about other parts of the country. My business, when you ask me who my biggest competitors are, it's not like another printing company in Nanuet or New City or something. It's all companies in the Midwest. The people are just buying things online. They have much cheaper land, taxes, energy, labor costs. \$65,000 school tax bill last week. All these things, this is where all our competitors are going, Midwest. Everything is driving the businesses out of the area to the Midwest and that's what I'm on top of Canada and China products.”

Zeldin responded. “That would be printing. It's not even like they're a little bit better than an estimate you're giving someone; it's night and day. It almost feels like you're outsourcing it to another country, like, when they come in, Well, you are a small fraction of what you're, what you're quoting.”

Ryan concluded, “Like if you go online and you Google printing companies online and you'll get like a whole group of 10 printing companies you could order from online. They're all owned by one company. They're all printing the same plants in the Midwest, and, this is what I'm up against competing.

Lawler introduced some local officials who were in attendance Bill Kennley and Ray Sheridan from the Rockland County Legislature and, our state legislators Carl Brabenec and, Bill Weber and Teresa Kenny, our town supervisor and opened the floor to them for comments.

Kenny took the baton.

<https://youtu.be/LxVuLNuDEE>

Weber picked up. “One thing I would say is when you see. The annual distraction, right. We talk about affordability and the party gets nervous and they say, well, it's data centers, right? Get rid of the data centers and shut them down, your energy bills will come down, right? Or we'll give you a \$100 or \$200 rebate 5 months after we pass the budget, that's supposed to solve people's electric bills, but you said it. Mike said it. Everyone else, I think, agrees that we have to do something about, right, the supply side of it, we need to not only drill but also open up all of the options that are available to us. Nuclear power, it's going to take a long time to build those plants upstate New York. I don't know, 10 years. It's not overnight. But we have no solution and yet.” Guys like Al, people like Alice, their bills are just constantly going up to a point where they're going to be in an economic problem. Any support you can give to us at the federal level will continue to be appreciated because of their struggle.

https://youtu.be/LETyqDe_7KQ

A couple of other people spoke on the nuclear power option, and Lawler took questions from the press. The only caveat was that there be no political questions. All questions had to be on the topics discussed at the conference.

Rockland Post got the first question. First again, thank you for coming and enlightening us as to what's going on. What can you guys do at the federal level to push to get, Indian Point open faster if possible.

Lawler responded.

<https://youtu.be/kgTKRwwT-AQ>

The last two questions dealt with electric school busses. Administrator Zeldin explained about a Canadian company that was contracted and prepaid for the busses and never send the amount they were contracted for because the company went bankrupt.

