



PRESS RELEASE

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NYS ASSEMBLYMAN CAHILL NAMED "LEGISLATOR OF THE YEAR" IN 2008 ENVIRONMENTAL VOTERS' GUIDE; SENATOR MORAHAN RECOGNIZED FOR EFFORTS TO CUT CLIMATE POLLUTION

HISTORIC GREEN GAP CLOSING BETWEEN NYS SENATE DEMS & GOP IN ANNUAL GREEN SCORECARD

(ALBANY, NY)—In the only scorecard that grades New York lawmakers according to their votes on legislation that could benefit or harm the state's natural resources, EPL/Environmental Advocates documented a narrowing of the recent "green gap" between state Senators this year. While Senate Democrats scored an average of 85 in 2008, Senate Republicans were not far behind with an average score of 75, closing the gap five points from last year. The green gap is closing due to the passage of several big-ticket environmental measures, including Net Metering Reforms, one of the environmental community's priority Super Bills for 2008. The green gap between members of the majority and minority parties in the State Assembly grew to 21 points from 15, with the Assembly Democrats average score of 98 and the Assembly Republicans at 79. Orange and Rockland County lawmaker Senator Thomas Morahan (R-38) was recognized for his support of legislation that would help stop climate change in the annual green scorecard. His score was also among the highest in the Senate.

The Assembly passed all four of the environmental Super Bills this year. Net Metering Reforms, the only 2008 priority measure to become law, will update state policy to save consumers money, reduce stress on aging transmission lines, and protect New Yorkers from the pollution generated by traditional power plants. Net metering is the practice that credits consumers for the clean energy they generate themselves. Thirteen significantly beneficial environmental bills passed this year, per EPL's scoring system.

This year's *Voters' Guide* recognizes the efforts of Assemblyman Kevin Cahill (D-Kingston) by naming him "Legislator of the Year" for his support of Net Metering Reforms. And while Senate scores were generally lower than those in the Assembly, several senators, including Thomas Morahan

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Page 2 – NYS Assemblyman Cahill Named Legislator of the Year in Environmental Voters' Guide (R-Nanuet), George Maziarz (R-Wheatfield) and Antoine Thompson (D-Buffalo), were commended for their leadership on one or more environmentally beneficial measures. Seventy-nine Assembly members earned scores in excess of 100 thanks to several eco-friendly bills passed under the leadership of Environmental Conservation Committee Chair Robert Sweeney (D-Lindenhurst). Assemblyman Sweeney receives an Honorable Mention in this year's *Voters' Guide*.

"Energy is at the core of many of the key issues our society is facing, be it the economy, public health, air quality, environmental justice or climate change. To meet these challenges we must focus New York's energy policies on conservation, efficiency, renewable generation, tougher emissions standards and smart, sustainable development. EPL/Environmental Advocates and their unrivaled network of grassroots activists are on the front line of our shared goal of making that so," said Assemblyman Kevin Cahill.

"I am pleased to have collaborated with my colleagues in the Senate and Assembly, as well as EPL/Environmental Advocates in drafting legislation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The result of these efforts was a strict, science-based bill, limiting future greenhouse gas pollution, creating a strong foundation for future action. This legislation put the world on notice that New York State is ready to avert the most serious effects of climate change," said Senator Morahan.

"Every year, New Yorkers count on EPL/Environmental Advocates' *Voters' Guide* to show how their representatives in the State Capital voted when faced with the choice to protect or pollute our irreplaceable natural resources," said Robert Moore, Executive Director, EPL/Environmental Advocates. "The 2008 *Voters' Guide* documents a significant change in the New York State Senate. Increasingly, senators on both sides of the aisle recognize their constituents' interest in protecting our air, land and water and are voting accordingly. Among the strongest messages to come out of this year's New York State Legislative Session is that our economy and communities only benefit from environmental protection. The passage of measures designed to protect Great Lakes water use, restructure tax credits under New York's Brownfield Cleanup Program, and reform the state's net metering law all attest to a greater understanding of how our environmental and economic health intersect and benefit all of us."

In this year's *Voters' Guide*, Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver and Majority Leader Ron Canestrari

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received scores of 100, while Assembly Minority Leader James Tedisco received a 76. The State Senate's new Majority Leader Dean Skelos received a 76, while former Majority Leader Joseph Bruno and Minority Leader Malcolm Smith both received scores of 72.

The *Voters' Guide* also lists environmental highlights and lowlights from Governor David Paterson's first year in office. Among the highlights were the Governor's action to squash the Broadwater liquefied natural gas terminal and a proposed Gas Tax Holiday for summer 2008. Lowlights include a return to politics-as-usual during state budget-making, a transfer of \$125 million from the Environmental Protection Fund for general budget relief, and support for the Jamestown "clean coal" project if it meets certain conditions.

The environmental community's Super Bills are legislative priorities for each session and are selected by the Green Panel, which includes representatives of green groups from across New York State. This year's Super Bills include the Wetlands Protection Act, which would protect wetlands of an acre or more; the Bigger Better Bottle Bill, which would expand the definition of returnable containers to include bottled water and sports drinks and earmark unclaimed deposits for environmental protection; and the Global Warming/Greenhouse Gas Pollution Control Act, which would reduce climate-altering pollution 80 percent by 2050.

EPL/Environmental Advocates calculates lawmakers' scores using ratings developed by its sister organization, Environmental Advocates of New York. Legislators earn between one and three points respectively for votes in support of bills rated by Environmental Advocates of New York as one, two and three "tree" bills. Tree-rated bills are those deemed beneficial to the environment. Likewise, legislators earn between one and three points for voting against bills that were given a rating of one, two or three "smokestacks." Smokestack-rated bills are those deemed detrimental to the environment.

The *Voters' Guide* is the first and only record of New York State lawmakers' votes on legislation that will impact the environment. The Guide has been produced and distributed statewide for more than 40 years. To view the complete report, visit www.eplvotersguide.org.

EPL/Environmental Advocates was founded in 1969 as one of the first organizations in the nation to advocate for the future of a state's environment and the health of its citizens. Through lobbying, advocacy, coalition building, citizen education and policy development, EPL/Environmental Advocates has been New York's environmental conscience—ensuring that environmental laws are enforced; that new measures are enacted when necessary; and that the public is informed of, and participates in, important environmental policy debates.