

Governor Faso opposes power line plan as unfair and unneeded

Unreal!

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A plan to build a "super power line" through several upstate communities to bring more electricity to New York City is not only unfair but unnecessary, governor candidate John Faso said Tuesday.

Faso said the state must instead build more power plants nearer the customers who need more energy – currently New York City and its suburbs. The state must also upgrade existing lines, such as the Pleasant Valley line in the Catskills, that already feed New York City but could carry more energy, said Faso, the Republican-Conservative candidate.

He said the use of new technology in existing lines could provide more power to New York City faster than building a new line and would avoid taking private land upstate.

Faso, the first candidate for governor to oppose the plan, was scheduled to make the remarks Tuesday in Central New York, where residents oppose the proposal to build a 200-mile long line from Utica to Orange County in the lower Hudson Valley. Opponents of the plan by the private company, New York Regional Interconnect, are urging Gov. George Pataki and federal lawmakers to block any use of eminent domain to take private land, including environmentally sensitive and historic areas.

Democratic front-runner Eliot Spitzer, the attorney general, hasn't taken a position on the plan. Democratic candidate Tom Suozzi, the Nassau County executive, has proposed placing the power line underground.

Faso said the 2003 blackout statewide, and the recent power losses in Queens, show the need for more power to be generated and for better transmission lines to get the electricity to New York City. But the city should pay for the benefit, not upstaters who must live with the massive power lines.

NYRI says electricity demand in New York City's northern suburbs is expected to outstrip supply in a few years, and a new high-capacity line is needed to bring power from central and western New York.

The company says the \$1.6 billion project will save consumers more than \$500 million a year.

Faso told the Upstate New York Citizens Alliance that the project would hurt upstate property values, the environment and would likely increase costs for upstate ratepayers to help pay for the project.

"Because this project will raise power rates upstate and provide no benefit to these local communities, I cannot support it," Faso said.

"One of the ironies here is that Mr. Spitzer is refusing to take a position, which is part and parcel of his campaign," Faso told The Associated Press. He noted that Spitzer said in a July debate with Suozzi that he wants to close a Westchester nuclear power plant, but didn't say how he would replace that power.

Faso also blamed the Democrat-led Assembly _ Spitzer's "allies" _ of blocking renewal of a law that would allow the construction of new power plants. Opposition by environmental groups, most of which support Spitzer, has contributed to a political stalemate that has kept new power plants from being built.

U.S. Sen. Charles Schumer has asked NYRI to identify alternative routes. U.S. Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton, also a Democrat, has asked the chairman of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to hold upstate hearings this summer.