

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
Washington, DC 20515-3214

March 3, 2021

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo  
Governor of New York State  
New York State Capitol Building  
Albany, NY 12224

Re: Astoria Power Plant

Dear Governor Cuomo and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation,

We are writing regarding NRG Energy's (NRG) Astoria Replacement Project (Project) in New York City. NRG is seeking to update the 50-year-old turbine with a new natural gas-fired power plant. Unfortunately, this replacement project still maintains our reliance on fossil fuel power generation and undermines the progress towards a more sustainable future. The environmental and health hazards that local, frontline communities have outlined are cause for serious consideration.

As you are aware, the aim of the Project is to replace 50-year-old turbines with new natural gas-fired power. Unfortunately, gas-powered energy and the process of extraction is not clean energy as some have touted. In fact, extracting fracked gas releases methane, a greenhouse gas that traps more than 86 times the heat of carbon dioxide in the short-term.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the entire process is prone to a high degree of leakage, undermining any potential gains that may be touted. Even if every coal plant were replaced by fracked gas electricity by 2030, emissions would remain on track to grow through 2050 due in part to pervasive methane leaks that make fracked gas as dangerous as coal.

Moving forward with the implementation of new natural gas-fired power creates nuisances and real health hazards, which the community has vocally opposed. Frontline and diverse communities, like the ones we represent, stand to be disproportionately exposed. A gas-fired power plant would further degrade air quality in neighborhoods already ridden with toxic fossil fuel power plants and elevated levels of asthma.

As you know, in 2020, New York City was one of the hardest hit areas in the country by the COVID-19 pandemic. Those suffering from respiratory illnesses were some of the most

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<sup>1</sup> Fracking, methane and climate. (2020, September 04). Retrieved February 15, 2021, from [https://www.earthworks.org/issues/fracking\\_methane\\_and\\_climate/](https://www.earthworks.org/issues/fracking_methane_and_climate/)

susceptible to COVID-19.<sup>2</sup> We already know that burning fracked gas and other fossil fuels causes poor health outcomes for those living near plants. But COVID-19 exacerbated these geographic health disparities in frontline and communities of color. Studies show a higher rate of COVID-19 severity and mortality in communities like ours that have suffered from historically high particulate matter.<sup>3</sup> At a time when our focus should be on increasing public health outcomes, the addition of a new fossil fuel burning plant does the exact opposite.

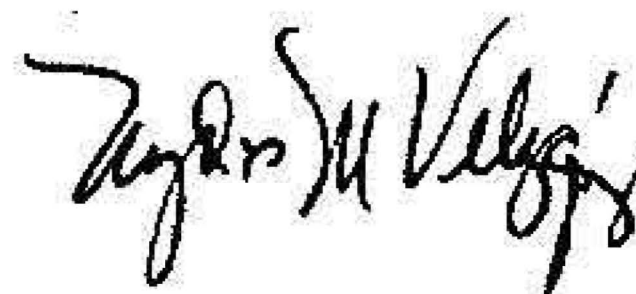
The climate crisis represents a national emergency to the future stability, prosperity, and general welfare of the United States and a growing body of scientific research has demonstrated that leakage, venting, and flaring of methane and other greenhouse gases in the course of oil and gas production and transmission significantly contributes to increased climate change. Further, any expansion of fossil fuel infrastructure is incompatible with our climate goals, at the City, State, and Federal level. Simply put, natural gas is not a bridge fuel. Instead, we believe all levels of government must make meaningful efforts to transition to green infrastructure, which has a history of creating well-paid jobs.

If you have any questions, please contact Daniel Bonthius at (202) 450-0152 or by email at Daniel.Bonthius@mail.house.gov. Thank you for your close consideration of this letter.

Sincerely,



Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez  
Member of Congress



Nydia Velázquez  
Member of Congress



Jamaal Bowman  
Member of Congress

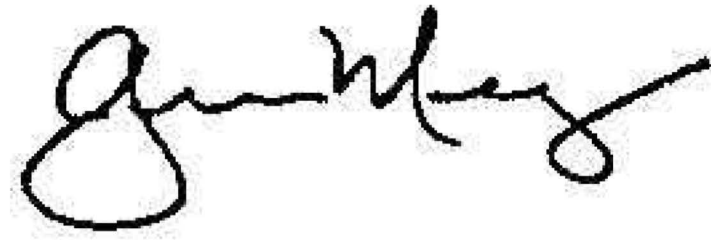


Mondaire Jones  
Member of Congress

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<sup>2</sup> Certain medical conditions and risk for severe covid-19 illness. (2021, February 3). Retrieved February 15, 2021, from <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-with-medical-conditions.html>

<sup>3</sup> Olumhense, E. (2020, September 29). For some near the Cross BRONX Expressway, covid-19 is an environmental justice issue, too. Retrieved February 15, 2021, from <https://www.thecity.nyc/2020/9/28/21492252/cross-bronx-expressway-covid-19-environmental-justice-nyc>




Grace Meng  
Member of Congress



Jerrold Nadler  
Member of Congress



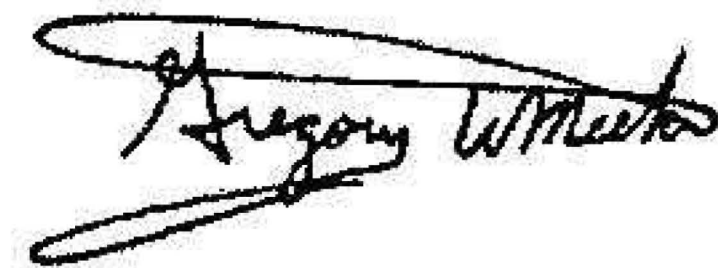
Carolyn B. Maloney  
Member of Congress



Yvette D. Clarke  
Member of Congress



Adriano Espaillat  
Member of Congress



Gregory W. Meeks  
Member of Congress

## Sara Agars

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**From:** Christopher Niebuhr  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 4, 2021 9:13 AM  
**To:** Sara Agars; Kelly Brady  
**Subject:** FW: Letter from the NY Delegation on the NRG Power Plant in Astoria  
**Attachments:** NY Delegation Letter on NRG Asotria Plant.pdf

Hi Sara and Kelly,

Could you all log the attached letter from the NY Delegation as correspondence? Thank you!

Best,  
Chris

Washington Office of the Governor  
Executive Assistant  
(202) 434-7102  
Christopher.Niebuhr@exec.ny.gov

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**From:** Bonthius, Daniel <Daniel.Bonthius@mail.house.gov>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 03, 2021 5:25 PM  
**To:** Christopher Niebuhr <Christopher.Niebuhr@exec.ny.gov>; Michelle Marchello <Michelle.Marchello@exec.ny.gov>  
**Cc:** Gerardo Bonilla <gerardo.bonilla@mail.house.gov>; Mazuera, Juan Diego <JuanDiego.Mazuera@mail.house.gov>  
**Subject:** Letter from the NY Delegation on the NRG Power Plant in Astoria

Hello!

I wanted to share the attached letter on the NRG power plant in Astoria, Queens. This letter is signed by Congresswoman Ocasio-Cortez and her colleagues in the NY delegation. Please flag for the Department of Environmental Conservation.

Thank you!

Daniel

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**Daniel Bonthius**  
Office of Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez  
Deputy District Director of Operations

He/Him

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