

## NOTES FOR CHANGE: SEPTEMBER 15, 2019 NEWSLETTER

### STRIKE FOR THE PLANET? THE FACE OF CHANGE

Editorial by Richard S. Gilbert

Swedish teen-ager **Greta Thunberg** is a prophet in the making with her urgent call for action in what she calls the “climate crisis.” One of the leaders of a “Global Climate Strike” (#ClimateStrike) on September 20, she sailed across the Atlantic (in a solar-powered sailboat to reduce her carbon footprint) to attend the **UN Climate Action Summit** in New York and the UN Conference of the Parties (COP 25) climate change gathering in Santiago, Chile. For more information on Greta, go to Wikipedia.



**Greta Thunberg (Wikipedia)**

While Interfaith Impact primarily engages in **legislative action**, mass-based social action is necessary to create a **climate** for enactment. While New York State has become a leader in such legislation, the Empire State is far from “green.” And so, while we are gearing up for the **2020 legislative session’s** “unfinished business,” we encourage participation in the **climate strike** to promote social action that will compel legislative remedies. (See below)

The 2018 NYS Legislature passed a ground-breaking **Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA)**. That passage is the beginning rather than the end of the effort. (See July 15 “Notes for Change” newsletter at [www.iinys.org](http://www.iinys.org)) A Council will be established to map a plan to achieve the ambitious objectives of CLCPA. Now we must ensure its funding. We will have to keep the pressure up to guarantee the 22-member **Climate Action Council** does its job. (There also will be a climate justice working group from disadvantaged and activist communities.) The **OFF Fossil Fuels Act**, more aggressive than CLCPA may be introduced in 2020.

For further information, go to [www.foodandwaterwatch.org](http://www.foodandwaterwatch.org). See the IINYS environmental Backgrounders at [www.iinys.org](http://www.iinys.org): “Eco-justice and Earth Care” and “Environmental Justice Climate Change.”

Back to Greta. We who have labored in environmental justice work should be both sobered and inspired by what this young woman has done and is doing – sobered in that we as adult activists have been either unwilling or unable to make global climate change a top priority issue; inspired by the importance of the dramatic impact of a single person in addressing an existential threat to life on this planet.

Perhaps it is fitting that this chapter of the environmental story be written by youth. Greta was inspired by the student activism following the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. There is a wider meaning here. It is perhaps time that we of a certain generation do more to encourage our successors. They are working to preserve the planet they will inherit. It is our job to help them.

## THE GLOBAL CLIMATE STRIKE IN NEW YORK STATE: HOW YOU CAN PARTICIPATE

The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reports that we have until 2030 to lower greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 45% from the 2010 level. In 2018 both the US and global GHG increased. The *New York Times* December 5, 2018 headline reads “Greenhouse Gas Emissions Accelerate Like a Speeding Freight Train in 2018 (<https://nytimes.com/2018/12/05/climate/greenhouse-gas-emissions-2018.html>).

Greta Thunberg has inspired people of all ages to join her in a “climate strike” on September 20, which will launch a week of action from September 20-27. The United Nations Secretary General will convene a UN Climate Action Summit on September 23 during the 74<sup>th</sup> session of the General Assembly. The Secretary-General’s action priorities include energy transition, industry transition, nature-based solutions, cities and local action, and resilience and adaptation. See <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/un-climate-summit-2019.shtml>.

IINYS has endorsed the march and statement from The People of Albany United for Safe Energy (PAUSE) and the Green Education and Legal Fund (GELF). They are sponsoring a march with students from local high schools and colleges to 79 Sheridan Avenue, the address of a fracked gas power plant in the middle of an environmental justice neighborhood. (Contact Sandy Steubing at 518-368-7045 or [ssteub@gmail.com](mailto:ssteub@gmail.com) for more information.

PAUSE calls upon Governor Cuomo to declare New York in a state of emergency in which he promises to do the following:

1. Immediate ban on all new fossil fuel projects
2. Immediate halt to all subsidies for fossil fuels from NYS
3. Increase funding from \$7-10 billion for renewable projects in the 20-21 budget, 40% of such funding will target disadvantaged communities
4. Convert all public buildings and vehicles to zero GHG emissions by 2023
5. Amend building codes to require all new buildings to be carbon emission free by 2023

In New York City a large rally is planned to coincide with the September 20 Strike: “One People, One Planet.” Community Church of New York 40 E. 35<sup>th</sup> Street will be the site of Communal Sign Making at 9:00am; a Prayer Service at 10:30am and departure to join the March at 11:30am. The March begins at Foley Square. To access the New York City information, go to <https://www.brightest.io/cause/fridays-for-future/activity/new-york-city-climate-strike-with-greta-thunberg/>

The **Rochester Climate Strike** occurs Friday, September 27, at 3:30 pm, starting at City Hall. Marchers will proceed to the Monroe County Legislature building, then RG&E, and finally the Federal Building. Speeches and demands will occur at each site.

To search for the closest protest to your location, go to: <https://globalclimatestrike.net/>

## TIME TO ORGANIZE FOR THE 2020 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Now is the time to mobilize local congregations and activists for 2020 – the second year of the Legislature elected in 2018. In November of 2020 all seats in the Assembly and Senate are up for election. Much of the IINYS agenda was passed in 2019, but there is important unfinished business. This fall provides an opportunity for IINYS and you to be prepared to act: (1) you can provide IINYS with a local contact with whom we can share information; (2) you can establish an information table on state issues. You may use the IINYS website at [www.iinys.org](http://www.iinys.org) for legislative updates and backgrounders addressing the moral and religious values that relate to specific issues; (3) you can set up a letter-writing table to enable congregants

to contact their legislators once the session begins; (4) you can sponsor congregation-wide and community-wide discussion of the issues; (5) you can participate in IINYS Webinars as they are announced. While much attention and energy will be spent on the national presidential and congressional campaigns, remember the special importance of state action in the face of federal inaction, or inept or counter-productive action.

**REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE: Unfinished business:** Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) (A 6512 Nolan/S 4844 Metzger): This act involves inclusion of comprehensive, medically accurate, culturally, age and developmentally appropriate sexuality education (CSE) in publicly funded K-12 schools statewide. Go to [www.nyclu.org](http://www.nyclu.org) - issues – reproductive rights.

See also an IINYS Backgrounder at [www.iinys.org](http://www.iinys.org) “Reproductive Justice – Clergy for Choice.”

**LET NEW YORK VOTE: Unfinished business:** Automatic Voter Registration, voting rights for parolees and a few other issues were not included in enacted legislation. These issues have been introduced, debated, but not yet passed. These will no doubt be on the 2020 agenda. The same can be said for public funding of campaigns. For updates, go to [www.letNYvote.org](http://www.letNYvote.org). Also, see the Backgrounders on Democracy, Redistricting and Campaign Finance Reform at [www.iinys.org](http://www.iinys.org).

Get Ready for Early Voting October 26 – November 3! As a result of legislation enacted this year, New Yorkers will have 9 days of early voting, including weekend and some evening hours. You can download information to share about early voting rules, times and locations at:

[Letnyvote.org/voting-info](http://Letnyvote.org/voting-info)

[Voteearlyny.org](http://Voteearlyny.org)

[my.lwv.org/new-york-state/new-york-state-early-voting](http://my.lwv.org/new-york-state/new-york-state-early-voting)

Each county has developed its own plan for early voting locations and hours, and some plans fail to make early voting accessible to all. If your county’s voting locations and hours are inadequate, contact your local officials with specific recommendations to implement by the 2020 primaries, if not immediately.

Hearing on campaign finance reform in NYS are underway. Go to <https://www.dos.ny.gov/press/2019/Campaign-Hearings-8-19.html>. Also see the League of Women Voters info: <https://my.lwv.org/new-york-state-early-voting>. For Let NY Vote Fact Sheets for downloading, go to <https://letnyvote.org/voting-info>.

In July, Governor Cuomo appointed a Public Financing commission to find a way to implement a small-donor matching system. See <https://www.gothangazette.com/state/8752-state-campaign-financing-commission-olds-first-public-hearing>. The first one was for experts; the second will be for public input from groups like IINYS. <https://www.dos.ny.gov/press/2019/Campaign-Hearings-9-4-19.html>. See the *New York Times* editorial: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/08/opinion/election-campaign-finance.html>.

**CRIMINAL JUSTICE: Unfinished business.** HALT (reduction of solitary confinement use) was not addressed by the Legislature despite vigorous advocacy. The Governor has pledged to reduce its usage through executive order, but the steps proposed so far have been deemed inadequate by those monitoring the issue. While his action is welcome, it is not as enduring as encoding new practices in law. Another governor could undo what Cuomo might do. HALT legislation (Humane Alternatives to Long-Term (HALT) Solitary Confinement Act, S1623/A2500) will be a high priority in 2020. IINYS has added its name to a supportive letter. There will be a rally October 2 at the Governor’s NYC office (other rallies around the state) and groups are asked to submit

comments – due by 5 pm October 27. For more information go to <https://www.facebook.com/NYCAIC>.

**FARMWORKER RIGHTS: Unfinished business:** There has been much push back on the Green Light legislation, and activists will need to monitor local officials to be sure it is properly administered. The same close observation will be required in relation to the Farmworkers “Bill of Rights.” For more details go to [www.ruralmigrantministry.org](http://www.ruralmigrantministry.org).

**LGBTQ RIGHTS: Unfinished business:** On this 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Stonewall, the passage of GENDA was welcome. However, keen observation that these laws are respected will be required by advocates. For more information go to [www.nyclu.org](http://www.nyclu.org) - Issues – LGBT rights. Also see the IINYS Backgrounder on GLBTQ Rights at [www.iinys.org](http://www.iinys.org).

**HEALTH CARE: Unfinished business.** While at the beginning of the 2019 session prospects for New York Health single-payer health care seemed bright, this legislation did not come to a vote in either chamber. There were, however, for the first time, hearings on this bill. Debate was furious, mainly around the transition process and methods of funding. See editorial in July 15 “Notes for Change” at [www.iinys.org](http://www.iinys.org). For more information, go to [www.nyhcampaign.org](http://www.nyhcampaign.org). A December 12, 2018 article discusses the Act in detail (<https://citylimits.org/2018/12/12/the-obstacles-facing-single-payer-in-new-york-are-also-why-some-want-it/>). Though it is dated, it provides a comprehensive and still-relevant view of continuing issues.

While 94.3% of New Yorkers already have health insurance, many are under- or poorly-insured. A major overhaul of New York State’s health insurance system is required. The IINYS Board will prioritize discussion and action on health care in the next session.

See the Backgrounder on Healthcare at [www.iinys.org](http://www.iinys.org) - Backgrounders  
See also the IINYS Position Paper at [www.iinys.org](http://www.iinys.org) - Positions

### WE INVITE YOU TO

- Become a member of IINYS and support it financially. To support either our 501C4 action arm, **IINYS, Inc.** or our tax deductible 501C3, **IINYS Foundation, Inc.**, go to <http://www.interfaithimpactnys.org/Donations.html>.
- Respond to our action alerts by contacting your elected officials and letting us know where they stand or if they want more information.
- Become an ambassador for IINYS in your congregation, receiving and distributing IINYS materials & encouraging congregational participation.
- Urge your minister/rabbi to address issues from the pulpit and in adult education

### DONATE NOW

Interfaith Impact of NYS depends on the donation of friends and members to maintain a year-round presence in Albany. Please, consider a generous donation now.

Go to <http://www.interfaithimpactnys.org/Donations.html> or [iinys.org/donate](http://iinys.org/donate) or by check. Form below.



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Amount enclosed: \$\_\_\_ (check made out to IINYS, Inc. or IINYS Foundation).

**Please mail to Treasurer, Interfaith Impact of NYS, 101 Coniston Dr., Rochester, NY 14610**

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518-463-5652; [www.iinys.org](http://www.iinys.org)**

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***NOTES FOR CHANGE*** newsletter is published the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month except during the summer. Action Alerts, Background Papers and Webinars will be announced. We thank the New York State Convention of Universalists, the Gilbert Spirit Fund of the First Unitarian Church of Rochester, as well as several congregations and many individuals for their support.