



## #PublicPower4LIPA Toolkit

**BACKGROUND:** Back in November of 2020, a range of residents and groups began organizing to urge the Long Island Power Authority (LIPA) to terminate its contract with PSEG-LI, municipalize, and democratize in the aftermath of Tropical Storm Isaias, which resulted in 645,000 LIPA customers without power for, on average, more than 2-7 days.

Over the past year and a half, we have built a network of supporters through the Reimagine LIPA campaign, consistently mobilized ratepayers to weigh in at LIPA Board meetings, held forums on the benefits of public power, organized rallies, and published pieces in multiple media outlets.

Now, in the 2022-23 NYS budget, we have passed legislation and secured funding for a legislative commission that will develop the roadmap to a restructured LIPA. Its intent is to restore the original vision of LIPA as a fully publicly owned power authority. It also establishes an advisory committee to provide the NYS legislature with a report on specific actions, legislation, and a timeline to accomplish this. This new commission marks the end of decades of disastrous public-private partnerships in the management of our electric utility. Along with \$2 million to fund its work, this commission will blaze a path towards a truly public utility that is accountable and will provide power that is more reliable, affordable and renewable.

Our work now is to ensure this process leads to a LIPA that is led by and accountable to those most impacted by decisions concerning our energy system: ratepayers, union workers, municipalities, community organizations, low-income households and environmental justice communities. This will mean ensuring that all parts of the commission process include the needs of impacted stakeholders

who have a vision for a truly accountable, democratic, renewable and affordable energy system. If you are interested in joining our efforts, [please fill out this form](#).

In order to advance the efforts of the LIPA Commission, we are working to mobilize those on Long Island and in the Rockaways to participate in the following actions over the next few weeks & months:

### ***Prepare Testimony for September Public Hearing on LIPA Commission Process***

By September 30th, 2022 The LIPA commission must hold at least one public hearing with a public comment period in Nassau, Suffolk, and Queens County on the establishment of public power. We will update this toolkit with additional information when more details are available.

### **SAMPLE COMMENT ON DEMOCRATIC REFORMS FOR LIPA**

My name is \_\_\_\_\_, a resident of \_\_\_\_\_, and a Long Island Power Authority ratepayer. I am here to say that I support the work of this commission. We must end the fundamentally flawed model of our utility and transition to a fully public model.

In the months after Tropical Storm Isaias, we saw tense and bitter exchanges as PSEG refused to negotiate with the LIPA Board's good faith demands. The LIPA board members expressed their fundamental mistrust of PSEG after learning how PSEG lied about its preparedness for the tropical storm, its immediate response to it, and the number of upgrades it made afterwards. LIPA itself determined that management failures were the root cause and that PSEG lacks proactive risk management.

Decisions about the future of the Long Island Power Authority, its relationship to PSEG, and its responsibilities to Long Island and Rockaway ratepayers should

belong to the ratepayers of this region, and the ratepayers of this region alone. This commission process is allowing for that and we must be clear on the reforms needed to build a truly accountable, democratic, renewable and affordable energy system.

Municipalization must be paired with democratization. We need a democratic LIPA that is accountable to our region's communities. This is the moment to reimagine, reinvent, and restructure LIPA so that it is led by those most impacted by decisions concerning our energy system: ratepayers, workers, municipalities, community organizations, low-income households, and environmental justice communities. We must ensure that those who use, pay for, and work for the system have a say in how it runs. We must invest in public-public partnerships to ensure the collective management of our common energy resources. Public power involves the operation, management, and policymaking of electric utilities exclusively by the public for the public interest and that is why the push for municipalization on Long Island and in the Rockaways must also ensure the following:

- A formalized partnership with a local university-based Energy Institute to contract with LIPA to conduct community engagement and research in order to offer recommendations to LIPA's Board on clean energy, ratepayer protections, worker issues, and climate justice, which the Board is obligated to consider and respond to.
- An accountable and representative Board that includes, in part, the direct election of members from ratepayers residing within equally apportioned districts within LIPA's service area.
- Proper oversight by the Public Service Commission, as with the rest of New York State, along with other robust mechanisms for public accountability.
- The modification of the mission of LIPA to include climate justice, energy democracy, participatory democracy, and equity in order to codify its commitment to a new paradigm of energy management.

Rather than continue the decades-long resource extraction of investing in expensive management fees for private entities, LIPA could double down on its commitment to and investment for Long Island and the Rockaways. LIPA has estimated that it can save nearly \$1 billion over the next decade by opting for

municipalization. So instead of bonuses to unaccountable management and dividends to distant stockholders LIPA could:

- Lower utility rates especially for low income households, seniors, and small businesses.
- Reinvest profits to enhance resiliency (e.g. bury lines to reduce future outages).
- Improve service to customers with special needs such as individuals requiring medical equipment (e.g. respirators, refrigerators) and laboratories conducting research.
- Support community solar (reverse changes in 2019) and more wide ranging conservation programs (some of which LIPA customers are not eligible for like Heat Smart).
- Seek out public-public partnerships that improve service delivery and community resilience: e.g. partnering with public bus systems to reduce emissions, improve air quality and reliability through electrification like NYPA is doing upstate and at JFK airport.

In replacement of intermittent opportunities for public engagement and no direct community participation in the operation of our utility, LIPA could become direct partners in new democratic models for energy management. The existing Advisory Board at LIPA is inadequate and the utility has struggled to engage the public across the many different Towns, Villages, and Cities of Long Island and in the Rockaways, fostering disengagement and distrust while perpetuating inequities and vulnerabilities. These new democratic models under meaningful public-public partnerships could include:

- Formalizing a relationship with a local Energy Institute, an independent non-governmental organization whose mission is to convene stakeholders, conduct research, and promote sustained, inclusive public engagement and participatory democracy in the pursuit of an innovative, affordable, and reliable power system on Long Island and in the Rockaways. The goal of the Institute is to be a respected convener of communities, experts, government, and utility officials and promote inclusive adaptive management and planning on Long Island and in the Rockaways with a special focus on

equity and environmental justice. The Institute would assist LIPA and Long Island and Rockaways organizations and communities working in the energy sector and aiming to equitably respond to the challenges of climate change.

- Resourcing cooperative ownership models for community solar and establishing participatory processes for renewable energy planning, along with other priorities detailed in the [Long Island Solar Roadmap](#).
- Establishing Energy Improvement Districts (EIDs) with Towns, Cities, and Villages that focus resources and set equity standards for energy democracy within communities facing high energy burdens and systemic barriers to accessing renewable energy resources, including designating neighborhoods or parcels of land for rezoning and dedicated investment for locally-led development of community solar, community geothermal ground loops, and publicly owned electric vehicle charging stations; setting up a dedicated trust to direct public funding, bonding, and technical assistance to EIDs; and utilizing community spaces such as schools, community centers, houses of worship, libraries, post offices, and parks to host both participatory energy planning processes and sites of renewable energy generation.

Following LIPA's public hearings about its updated Options Analysis back in May, it's clear that we have overwhelming consensus for LIPA to commit to full municipalization. Ninety per cent of the testimony, both live and written, was in favor of this path for our utility. The testimonies added to the chorus of community and political support for public power for LIPA.

Since 2020, a growing number of environmental organizations, grassroots community groups, civil rights organizations, reproductive healthcare providers, business associations, Indigenous groups, and faith organizations have signed onto the [Reimagine LIPA](#) statement, demonstrating the widespread support for moving away from the failed public-private partnership model.

This commission was set up to steer Long Island and the Rockaways back on course to the electric utility we need. I urge this commission to stay strong on this path and incorporate the above suggestions to truly reimagine LIPA.

***Ask Organizations to Endorse Our “Reimagine LIPA Statement”***

Whether it's a house of worship, civic association, local environmental organization, or business group, many of us are connected to some kind of organization. We ask that within your networks, you reach out to add signatories to the [Reimagine LIPA Statement](#), already endorsed by over 30 organizations:

***Email Draft***

Dear \_\_\_\_\_ ,

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am a supporter of public power for Long Island and the Rockaways. I invite your organization to [join this sign-on letter](#) calling to end the private LIPA model and move towards a fully publicly owned, managed, and operated energy system. LIPA has been at another crossroads with the failures of PSEG LI in the aftermath of Tropic Storm Isaias and now is the time to reimagine our energy system in order to govern it like the public resource it is.

If your organization is able to sign on, **please [fill out this form](#) as soon as you are able.**

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_

## *Submit Letters to the Editor in Support of the Commission Process*

### Recent Newsday Articles with [their LTE Submission form](#)

1. [LIPA faces another crossroads](#)
2. [Top PSEG LI exec received nearly \\$900,000 in total compensation last year](#)
3. [PSEG LI spent \\$1M on promotional ads, \\$44G on arrears help, report says](#)

### How to write a letter to the editor

1. **Find a piece to respond to:** Regularly read the publication(s) where you might want to submit LTEs, and find a piece that you can respond to in order to make your point. To write about public power, you could respond to an article about storms, electricity rates, an announcement by an elected official around the topic, etc. If you can't find a specific article to connect to, try to connect your piece to a major news hook.
2. **Draft a short response (around 200 words) to the article that makes your point:** Use some of our [talking points below](#) and personal experiences to write a compelling letter. Put your most important point in the first paragraph.
3. **Identify yourself:** After your letter, make sure to include the following information about yourself: Your full name; Town/City/Village; Any organizational affiliation; Any other relevant information
4. **Send to the outlet you're writing for!** Only send your letters to one publication at a time. If you can't find the contact information for the publication you're trying to write to, let us know.

**Most of the time, it's easier to publish in local outlets than big papers. Elected officials, their staff, and activists all read local papers and publishing there is a critical way to reach our targets!**

## ***Organize Lobby Visits with your State Senators & Assembly Members***

Email [Ltyson@lipc.org](mailto:Ltyson@lipc.org) for assistance if you have not done this before.

- 1. Schedule Your Visit:** Reach out to your legislator via phone and request a meeting time (find your State [Assembly Member here](#) | find your State [Senator here](#)). If they don't get back to you within two days, follow up via phone and email. Sometimes they ask you for a list of other individuals who will join, to which you can give them an estimated number and tell them you will give them a full list shortly before the actual meeting. **They will often provide a Zoom link or a call in number, but if they don't you can use LIPCs line by emailing [Ltyson@lipc.org](mailto:Ltyson@lipc.org).**
- 2. Recruit people to join you:** Lobbying is always easier with a friend! Reach out to family, friends, and neighbors to participate in the visit with you. It may seem intimidating if you haven't done so before but electeds are supposed to work for us and our own experiences and opinions are valid enough to be heard. Lobbying is not just for experts or insiders.
- 3. Make sure you have your materials read.** You can review our [talking points below](#) to inform your conversation. We want each of these elected officials on Long Island and in the Rockaways to publicly support the primary demand **for LIPA to fully municipalize and democratize through the Commission process.**
- 4. Report back after your visit.** We want to know how your visits went, what you learned, and what the response of the elected officials were as we continue to build this campaign. Email [Ltyson@lipc.org](mailto:Ltyson@lipc.org) to share.



## TALKING POINTS

- We must fully support and promote the work of the LIPA Commission. It will mark the end of decades of disastrous public-private partnerships in the management of our electric utility and blaze a path towards a truly public utility that is accountable and will provide power that is more reliable, affordable and renewable.
- We must ensure all parts of the commission process include the needs of impacted stakeholders who have a vision for a truly accountable, democratic, renewable and affordable energy system.
- Municipalization must be paired with democratization. We need a democratic LIPA that is accountable to our region's communities. Public power involves the operation, management, and policymaking of electric utilities exclusively by the public for the public interest and that is why the push for municipalization on Long Island and in the Rockaways must also ensure the following:
  - A formalized partnership with a local university-based Energy Institute to contract with LIPA to conduct community engagement and research in order to offer recommendations to LIPA's Board on clean energy, ratepayer protections, worker issues, and climate justice, which the Board is obligated to consider and respond to.
  - An accountable and representative Board that includes, in part, the direct election of members from ratepayers residing within equally apportioned districts within LIPA's service area.
  - Proper oversight by the Public Service Commission, as with the rest of New York State, along with other robust mechanisms for public accountability.

- The modification of the mission of LIPA to include climate justice, energy democracy, participatory democracy, and equity in order to codify its commitment to a new paradigm of energy management.
- Publicly-owned utilities and co-ops nationwide fare as well or better than private sector utilities in the measures customers care about – customer satisfaction and reliability. They also tend to be leaders in clean energy.
- Across the country, 2,000 public power utilities serve almost 15% of Americans, offering 13% cheaper rates and 46% shorter outage times than private utilities: In the face of worsening storms, Winter Park, Florida voted to municipalize in 2003. They’ve since expanded solar generation and vastly improved grid reliability, while keeping rates below their state’s average.
- Municipal utilities can be remarkably innovative: In 1996, Chattanooga’s Electric Power Board began investing in fiber optics, laying the groundwork for a world-class smart grid that has reduced power outages by 60% and saved the city close to \$60 million annually.
- To properly represent the public, LIPA’s board must include better representation of critical local stakeholders, from resilience experts to community and environmental advocates. Planning and operations must be informed by robust public participation processes and partnerships with universities and local organizations.
- LIPA’s own *Adoptions Analysis* states that municipalization would result in: “Savings of \$65 to \$75 million per year compared to PSEG LI contract. Municipal Management is financially feasible and an attractive alternative to the single-source service provider model. This savings can be used for storm hardening, investing in clean energy production, and lowering rates.”