

Last week Catherine Rampell of the Washington Post tweeted an article from the Register Star about the solar debate in Copake. Her tweet included a quote from me, saying in part "We are proud to stand with other rural Towns in challenging the 94-c regulations. While we recognize the challenge of climate change, the challenge to the State was to confront the climate crisis in a way which would protect rural New York... In failing to comply with SEQRA they showed disregard if not contempt for the rural landscapes, prime farmland and, woodlands which we treasure."

A few moments after the tweet posted I received an email from someone named Doug. Doug wrote: "Just wanted to commend your fantastic work crafting an epitaph for humanity's gravestone." "The existential threat of climate change is real. However," ... really says it all."

The Town of Copake has said again and again that Copake is not opposed to a solar installation. It is the magnitude of Shepherd's Run- as well the siting right in front of residential areas without any effort at adequate shielding which makes the project, as proposed, unpalatable.

In this debate there are two sides. Both acknowledge the threat of climate change. We are suing NYS because ORES would allow a 245 acre industrial site in Copake without SEQRA review. The other side says "There's a war on. We cannot worry about your viewsheds or local laws or SEQRA or home rule. Everyone has to do their part."

This country has a long history of extreme measures because "there is a war on". There was a war on and we thought it was ok to intern the Japanese. There was a war on Communism and we experienced the McCarthy era. There was a war on drugs and we passed the Rockefeller laws and locked up two-bit players for life.

We are suing New York State because NYS did not take the time and care to pass laws and regulations which would both allow renewable energy but also balance the very real concerns of rural communities like Copake.

There are two sides to the solar debate and both are correct. And someplace in the middle, there is a narrow strip of no man's land where there could be compromise- if anyone in New York State was willing to have that hard conversation. There could be a solution if New York State paused long enough to pass legislation and regulations which would address climate change in a way which does not put the entire burden on small rural towns who are unlucky enough to host a substation. Every single law and regulation in NY favors corporate interests. If corporate developers were mandated to actually work to protect local resources and address community concerns we might find a solution. Where is the leader willing to do the hard work?

There is no doubt. The threat of climate change is real. It is urgent. It is not just a national threat- it is a global threat. The conversation between the two sides has to begin with acknowledgment and respect. But who will lead the conversation?