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Council Members, Climate Activists Urge Speaker Corey Johnson & Council to Enact Gas Free NYC Bill to Reduce Air Pollution and Create Green Jobs

(*New York, N.Y.*) Legislation to effectively end air-polluting and climate-heating gas use in new construction and gut renovations was [introduced in the Council today](#). The bill, Intro 2317, would limit air pollution from newly-constructed buildings, which can be designed to higher energy efficiency standards for reliance on clean, new technologies, such as heat pumps and renewable energy instead of polluting gas boilers. A [recent analysis by experts](#) estimates that air pollution from fossil fuel combustion in buildings kills 826 New Yorkers per year.

“Asthma on a hot day when air pollution is the highest can be a scary, life-threatening experience and so the Council led by Speaker Johnson should pass this bill to stop air pollution that triggers asthma and heats the climate,” **said Cynthia Norris, a Brownsville resident and member of New York Communities for Change who suffers from asthma.**

The groups point to the high rates of illness from air pollution, especially the worse air quality in neighborhoods with predominantly Black or Latinx residents. Ending gas use in new buildings would also reduce climate-heating pollution by many millions of metric tons and create new jobs in clean-energy design and construction.

“The 41st council district, which I represent, encompasses Brownsville, Ocean Hill, parts of East Flatbush, Bedford Stuyvesant and Crown Heights and we have felt the brunt of environmental injustice. Historically we were left out of climate change conversations however in recent years we have taken steps to reverse that course. For that reason, I am proud to lead this charge. I look forward to working with all stakeholders to ensure that we turn a corner towards a healthier future without putting duress on the hardworking property and small business owners in my district and in the city,” **said Intro 2317’s co-prime sponsor, Councilmember Alicka Ampry-Samuel.**

Moving new buildings onto heat pumps and energy efficiency will also create thousands of good jobs in the rapidly-growing clean energy economy. New York City’s Local Law 97, which will slash pollution from existing large buildings, is on track to create tens of thousands of new jobs. The newly-introduced “Gas Free NYC” legislation would further the city’s development of clean energy jobs.

The bill’s introduction sounds a starter gun on what is expected to be a fierce battle between environmentalists and community groups and the real estate and gas industries, which oppose the legislation. The groups point to the high rates of illness from air pollution, especially the worse air quality in neighborhoods with predominantly Black or Latinx residents. Ending gas use in new buildings would also reduce climate-heating pollution by many millions of metric tons and create new jobs in clean-energy design and construction.

“This bill will help reduce air pollution and emissions that contribute to climate change, which will help address health disparities experienced by people of color,” **explained Peggy Shepard, Co-Founder and Executive Director at WE ACT for Environmental Justice.** “A recent [study](#) found that communities of color in the city are exposed to 17 percent more PM_{2.5} emissions associated with residential gas combustion than the population average, with Blacks facing 32 percent higher exposure. The health impacts of this disproportionate exposure can be seen in the higher rates of mortality and morbidity in these communities – our communities – including chronic respiratory diseases like asthma.”

Intro 2317 is expected to receive a public hearing in June, which would clear its path to passage in the Council. Mayor de Blasio has [already expressed his support for enactment of a gas ban.](#)

“The science is clear - reliance on fossil fuels must end in order to prevent the worst impacts of the climate crisis,” **said Liz Moran, Environmental Policy Director for the New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG).** “Recently, the International Energy Agency stated that fossil fuels have to remain in the ground and recommend banning fossil fuels for home heat. Banning fossil fuels for new construction and major renovations follows the recommendations of climate scientists, protects the health of New Yorkers, and sets a precedent for the state and nation to follow - the Speaker Corey Johnson and the council should not hesitate to pass this legislation.”

Thanks to development of new technologies and wider adoption, building new buildings that rely on heat pumps (air source or geothermal) and higher energy efficiency (better air sealing, ventilation and insulation), the costs of clean energy development versus building new gas infrastructure are comparable.

“This bill moves New York City one step closer to breaking the addiction of fossil fuels. Investments in clean energy are key to mitigating the effects of climate change in frontline communities,” **said Keith Kinch, General Manager and Co-Founder of BlocPower.**

“It’s time for New York City to take swift action to end the era of fossil fuels. That starts with a ban on using fracked gas in new construction,” **said Alex Beauchamp, Northeast Region Director at Food & Water Watch.** “The Council and Speaker Johnson should pass this commonsense legislation immediately to finally address our ruinous reliance on fracked gas.”

“Reduction in fossil fuel use is an urgent matter. Transitioning as quickly as possible via Council legislation is an effective method to implement existing alternatives, such as heat pumps,” **said John Rath, Director of Operations, NY-GEO.**