



Statement on 2017 Legislative Session

The 2017 New York State Legislative session ended on June 21st as both houses adjourned and left Albany. It remains unclear at this time if the two houses will return to complete unfinished business. The two houses were deadlocked over issues of “Mayoral Control” of New York City schools and extensions for local taxation districts across the state. Both of these issues are important for New York City and state residents and may require further action.

There was unfinished business for the Adirondacks as well. The two houses were close to reaching an agreement in the last hours of the session on enabling legislation for the proposed “Health and Safety Land Accounts” amendment to Article XIV, Section 1, the “forever wild” provision of the State Constitution. This amendment would provide access to 250 acres of Forest Preserve lands for maintenance of local highways in the Adirondacks bordered by Forest Preserve, and lands for municipal water wells, as well as authorize burial and colocation of utility lines and bike paths in state and local highway corridors. The “enabling legislation” sets in law the process for the implementation and administration of the amendment.

The two houses, led by Assembly Conservation Committee Chairman Steven Englebright, and Assembly members from the Adirondacks Billy Jones and Dan Stec, and Senator Betty Little, were close to agreement on the terms of the enabling legislation late in the session. Time ran out before the enabling legislation could be passed. While the Senate completed “2nd passage” of the actual “Health and Safety Land Accounts” amendment, the Assembly did not pass it, waiting until the terms of the enabling legislation were finalized.

It’s possible, if the Legislature reconvenes, that the enabling legislation and 2nd passage of the Health and Safety Land Accounts amendment could still pass this year. Bigger issues will drive the decision to reconvene the Legislature, but this may provide an opportunity to pass these Adirondack matters. Protect the Adirondacks continues to support passage of enabling legislation before 2nd passage of the draft amendment and will work, if there is opportunity, to see these measures pass in the weeks ahead.

The Legislature also failed to pass new legislation to amend the Adirondack Park Agency Act to require conservation design for large subdivisions. This legislation was introduced by Assembly Conservation Committee Chairman Steven Englebright. It was opposed by local government, some members of the Common Ground Alliance steering committee, and scientific research organizations that requested more time to convene a consensus

driven public process to develop broad-based support for this bill. A wide-ranging stakeholder process is being planned to start this summer with the purpose of having a new conservation design bill ready for legislative introduction in January 2018.

For more information:

Peter Bauer, Executive Director, (O) 518-685-3088 (c) 518-796-0112

June 23, 2017