



April 25, 2023

Memorandum of Support S.27/A.2486

S.27 (Stec)/A.2486 (Jones) Authorizes the state to convey certain forest preserve land; such sale shall be subject to legislative approval and the proceeds of such conveyance shall be used for acquisitions to the forest preserve.

Protect the Adirondacks supports the proposed amendment to Article 14, Section 1, the “forever wild” clause of the New York State Constitution, authorizing the sale of 92 acres of a former prison compound known as Camp Gabriels in the Town of Brighton, Franklin County in the Adirondack Park (S.27 Stec/A.2486 Jones). This property was formerly a tuberculosis sanatorium and an annex to a private college prior to conversion to a state prison. Occupied by two dozen buildings, these lands possess no important open space, natural resource, or public recreation value.

Over 200 acres of State-owned forestlands surrounding the 92-acre prison complex, which were part of State’s original purchase, were reclassified by the Adirondack Park Agency from a “State Administrative” classification to a “Wild Forest” classification and will remain part of the Forest Preserve.

This amendment is necessary for the proposed sale of the Camp Gabriels property because all State-owned and utilized lands in the Forest Preserve counties of the Adirondack Park are Forest Preserve lands. Consequently, the lands are protected by the Constitution’s “Forever Wild” clause and cannot be sold or leased without a constitutional amendment. This amendment passed the Senate in 2022.

Protect the Adirondacks supported a prior version of this amendment that would have transferred these lands to area local governments for a variety of public purposes. We still believe that’s a better use of this facility than sale to a private owner. Unfortunately, that effort does not enjoy support from either the Executive or from enough local government leaders in the Franklin County. Given this reality, removal from the Forest Preserve and sale of these lands is the only viable option to provide a new use for the property. Protect the Adirondacks supports the amendment’s requirements that the sale must be approved by the Legislature and that all proceeds from the sale may be used only for acquisition of lands to be added to the Forest Preserve. We also support the provision to allow the Town of Brighton to utilize the water treatment facilities to help local residents whose wells were damaged by road salt pollution.

The proposed amendment should be accompanied by enabling legislation that provides

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important details about the implementation of the amendment that the public must know. We believe that first passage of a proposed Article 14 constitutional amendment must always include passage of accompanying enabling legislation.

Passage of this amendment is important for the Town of Brighton and for the economic and community development of the area. This legislation constitutes “first passage” of a new Constitutional Amendment. “Second passage” would take place in the first year of the next successive Legislature, in 2025. This amendment would then need to be approved by the voters in November of 2025.

For all of these reasons, Protect the Adirondacks supports S.27/A.2486

For more information:

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