Seneca County leaders unite against cryptomining, urge Hochul to OK moratorium

In Seneca County, Democrats and Republicans have found common ground on one issue: cryptomining.
The county Board of Supervisors passed a resolution urging Gov. Kathy Hochul to sign legislation imposing a two-year moratorium on cryptomining operations. According to the bill's text, it specifically targets power plants using carbon-based fuels that provide "behind-the-meter electric energy consumed or utilized by cryptocurrency mining operations that use proof-of-work authentication methods to validate blockchain transactions."

Lawmakers approved the moratorium before the end of the state legislative session this month, but it's an issue that divides members of both major parties. In the Assembly, the bill passed by a 91-56 vote, with some Democrats joining Republicans to vote against the measure. The same was true in the state Senate, where the bill passed by a 35-28 vote.

Hochul is reviewing the legislation but hasn't said whether she will sign it. New York City Mayor Eric Adams is urging her to veto the bill.

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Seneca County does not have cryptomining operations, but it's located across Seneca Lake from Greenidge Generation's facility in Dresden, Yates County. In the supervisors' letter to Hochul, they highlighted their efforts to protect the environment, especially lakes and waterways.

"We are holding up our end of the deal to protect our environment and honor the state's climate goals," they told the governor. "We ask that you hold up the state's end of the deal by denying Greenidge Generation's air permit applications and signing the bill that issues a moratorium on these kinds of currency operations."

Additionally, the chairs of the Seneca County Democratic and Republican committees, David Wood and Thomas Fox, issued a rare joint statement supporting the denial of permits for Greenidge Generation's plant.

"It is not often that we find common ground, but we hope that the governor takes notice that we stand united in Seneca County in preserving the wonder and beauty of the Finger Lakes," the chairs said.
Opponents of cryptomining cite the environmental impact, specifically the carbon emissions that result from the practice. But supporters believe the moratorium would hurt a growing industry in the U.S.

After the bill's passage, Greenidge released a statement saying that its operations would continue. The company noted that the legislation would not apply to its operations — the measure would cover "all permits or renewal applications filed" after it takes effect. But there is a section that applies to permit renewals, which could affect Greenidge's facility.

Kyle Barnhart, who serves as Lodi town supervisor and is the lone Democrat on the Seneca County Board of Supervisors, hopes the bill will be signed into law.

"Governor Hochul must stop delaying and take action against cryptomining now," he said.

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