

THE SARATOGIAN

State must improve power grid

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By: Arthur “Jerry” Kremer

To the Editor,

Another winter storm, another patchwork of power outages around the state. At best they’re a miserable inconvenience; at worst, they can cost lives. People whose homes, businesses, and schools go dark and cold get angry, and some public officials respond by condemning the utilities for not restoring electricity instantaneously.

Such reactions are understandable but they also ignore salient facts.

First, the utilities are working with power lines and support structures that are, by and large, at least 40 years old. Essentially, our electricity is delivered the way it was a century ago—and the trees that surround the lines haven’t gotten any younger either.

Second, the utilities have applied the lessons of Superstorm Sandy, stockpiling poles and burying transformers wherever feasible. When a storm is on its way, they’ll call in mutual-aid utility crews, sometimes from hundreds of miles away, to boost their repair capabilities.

Third, once they’re needed, our skilled and dedicated linemen work fast, around the clock, braving freezing precipitation, high winds, and flying and falling debris. But because they’re working on a rickety old grid, it’s like trying to put out a house fire using squirt guns—it can take a long time.

Public officials who care about preventing blackouts must do more. They need to push New York to do the planning, prioritizing, budgeting, and investing required to upgrade and modernize our transmission lines and the structures that carry them. Our utility crews are working to their utmost capabilities, and they and all of us who rely on them deserve a better game plan.

Sincerely,

Arthur “Jerry” Kremer

Chairman

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