

January 21, 2026

Dear Town Supervisors:

Home Rule is very important for our towns, and Home Rule is being threatened regarding how towns handle commercial solar. There are two bills in the Legislature in Albany that the Upstate New York Towns Association is very concerned about. Those bills are Senate Bill 8119 and Assembly Bill 9087. If those bills move out of committee, get passed by both houses of the Legislature, and the Governor signs the bills, each town will be impacted by having to rewrite the solar laws they had passed regarding commercial solar using the State's template and completing all this work in 120 days. This would not be Home Rule. This would be State Rule. Our Association will be lobbying hard this year to keep these bills from being passed.

Last year Senate Bill 1786 and Assembly Bill 6047 passed the Legislature unanimously. This legislation would have required the Department of Health to publish a report on the incidence of tick-borne illnesses annually on the department's website. It was a surprise that Governor Hochul vetoed this bill considering the serious public health threat tick-borne diseases are. Our Association will be lobbying again this year for tick-borne disease education and research.

Governor Hochul did sign the bill related to Senate Bill 7501 and Assembly Bill-8086 which directs counties to develop and maintain comprehensive county emergency medical system plans. Our association supported this legislation that helps our EMS agencies. We are proud that we were a part of the push for successful legislation that now requires payment for out-of-network ambulance services to go directly to the ambulance companies, not to the patients. This financially helps the ambulance companies. We will be supporting legislation again this year that helps our EMS providers.

Lack of reliable Internet access in some rural areas is still a problem. In our lobbying with State legislators this year, we will make them aware that the State's BEAD application for federal funds did not include funding for fiber installation for most of the counties in which we represent towns. The one exception was Chenango County which will receive funding for some fiber installations. The fixed wireless recommendation by the State for many rural areas will still have the tree interference problem. We will continue to push for more fiber installations as well as support low to the earth satellites such as Starlink.

The last area that we are supporting legislation on is the destruction of ash trees by the Emerald Ash Borer. Last year Senate Bill 5368 was introduced. This bill would provide tax credit for removal of dead ash trees. This year we will continue to support this bill in the Senate and work to find a sponsor for a companion bill in the Assembly.

As you can see, our Association has a major focus on legislation at the State level that will help you as member towns. Please contact me if you see other areas of legislation that need attention to help your towns.

**Your 2026 membership invoice is enclosed. As you can see, we continue to maintain dues at \$400 annually. Your support makes it possible for the Association to work for you in Albany.**

Thank you in advance for your continued support.

All the best,

*Carolyn*

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