And on the regulatory side, our intervention in Xcel Energy’s rate case resulted in the Commission slashing the utility’s requested rate increase by more than half, rejected investments detrimental to local solar growth, and most significantly, acknowledged the importance of equity in utility ratemaking—a core tenet of the testimony we, alongside our coalition partners, submitted during the proceeding.

4 New York

The passage of the Build Public Renewables Act (BPRA) reaffirms the Empire State’s commitment to a clean energy transition. As part of the NY Renew law, Vote Solar played a crucial role over the last few years in shaping equitable clean energy provisions in the BPRA. Passed as part of New York’s annual budget, this groundbreaking policy will bridge the disconnect between the state’s clean energy targets and the power of the New York Power Authority (NYPA) to reify those mandates through creating and operating programs and projects. It includes a measure to create a program for discounted energy bills for low- and moderate-wealth ratepayers. The BPRA will not only help create thousands of new jobs, but also ensures that displaced fossil fuel workers are prioritized for these jobs, that workers’ rights are protected, and that there is specific funding for workforce training in renewable energy. The law also phases out gas peaker plants to be replaced by renewable energy by 2030. New York also made history with a first-of-its-kind statewide legislative ban on fossil fuel usage in new buildings (with a few exceptions), a policy we helped shape through our earlier work with the state’s Climate Scoping Plan. Heat and power for buildings account for a third of the state’s GHG emissions and has been linked to the high rates of childhood asthma in the state.

A&E Callout: Vote Solar’s Access and Equity Advisory Committee (AEAC) is currently hosting its second convening, this year’s focus is on interconnection, equity, and what that means for BIPOC, frontline and low-wealth communities that are interested in developing and leading their own community solar projects. Interconnection is the complex network of regulations, integration of clean energy technologies, and processes that dictate how new generators are connected to the utility electric grid—a vital piece in connecting renewables to the grid. Through a series of four virtual sessions, the AEAC Convening aims to collectively explore and define fundamental concepts, challenges and possible solutions regarding equitable interconnection. Vote Solar provided the equity and policy expertise in these guided and interactive discussions, while our long-time partner the Interstate Renewable Energy Council (IREC) provided the technical expertise. The five participants, selected through an application process, are all directly active within and/or provide services to BIPOC and frontline communities and bring a wealth of diversity in terms of their professional and lived experiences. At the end of the process, the AEAC will produce an issue brief that will serve as a critical tool for under-resourced communities.