

Post Standard  
October 10, 2009

## Former Rep. John McHugh's acid rain regulations left out of U.S. Senate climate bill

By Mark Weiner / The Post-Standard

Adirondack Lakes make comeback from acid rain Kevin and Diane Roy of Oneida watch a loon as they stand at the shore of Moss Lake in the Central Adirondacks. The Roys have been coming to Moss Lake for 25 years. Moss Lake is one of the lakes in the central Adirondacks that have made a comeback from acid rain. Mike Greenlar / The Post Standard. In one of his last acts as a congressman for Northern and Central New York, former Rep. John McHugh fought to include provisions to fight acid rain in a landmark climate-change bill passed by the House of Representatives.

Now the U.S. Senate has come out with its own draft of a climate bill, but without any mention of acid rain or new regulations.

McHugh, a Republican from Pierrepont Manor, became President Barack Obama's secretary of the Army last month. But before leaving for his new post, he was among only eight Republicans to vote for the controversial House bill.

McHugh said he voted for the bill because its sponsors agreed to his request to include new, tougher regulations for emissions of sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxides and mercury – the three pollutants that have damaged Adirondack lakes and forests.

Now the congressman is gone, and the Senate appears unwilling to take on acid rain, disappointing environmental groups such as the Adirondack Council.

After the a draft of the Senate bill was released last week, Brian Houseal, executive director of the Adirondack Council, said the group has called on Congress since 1995 to enact stronger clean air legislation to regulate acid rain.

“We want to make sure that the Senate does not miss this golden opportunity to put an end to acid rain once and for all in the Adirondacks,” Houseal said, adding the group has appealed to several Senate members to amend the draft legislation.

### Big names start to weigh in on NY-23 race

Even before Gov. David Paterson proclaimed a special election last week in the 23rd Congressional District, national political figures jumped into the three-way race that has the eyes of Washington on it this fall.

Vice President Joe Biden was the first out of the gate, appearing at a \$1,000 per person fundraiser last month in Syracuse for Democrat Bill Owens, a Plattsburgh lawyer making his first run for public office.

The next big-name endorsement came from actor and former U.S. Sen. Fred Thompson, a conservative Republican who lost his bid in the GOP presidential primary last year.

Thompson wrote a letter to supporters of his political action committee, FredPAC, urging them to help Conservative Party nominee Doug Hoffman, a Lake Placid accountant who is a registered Republican.

“If ever there was an opportunity to send a message to Washington, to the Obama Administration, and to the politicians who have made careers of ignoring the will of the people they represent...Doug Hoffman is giving us a great opportunity to do just that,” Thompson wrote.

A Siena College poll found a wide open three-way race among Owens, Hoffman and Republican Assemblywoman Dede Scozzafava, of Gouverneur. They are seeking the seat vacated last month by McHugh.

#### Schumer gets emotional

Sen. Charles Schumer urged the U.S. Postal Service this week to reverse its plan to close the North Syracuse Post Office, just as he did in 2006 when the office on South Main Street was on a list of those slated to be closed.

But this time, New York’s senior senator added a new reason – the emotional impact on the village -- to avoid the closing.

“This post office has been an integral part of the community for over 100 years,” Schumer wrote in a letter Tuesday to the Postmaster General. “To close it down would be more than an inconvenience – it would have an emotional impact on the residents of North Syracuse.”

Schumer, D-N.Y., noted the strong community support to keep the post office open, including a petition signed by more than 1,000 residents.

He said the village post office, established in 1887, serves two senior living facilities within walking distance.

The postal service, in recommending the closing of the village office, said its business could be handled by the Syracuse area’s main post office, less than two miles away, on East Taft Road.

#### Washington words

“We shouldn’t place another burden on our veterans by requiring them to actively pursue the care they may want or need...”

--U.S. Rep. Michael Arcuri, D-Utica, testifies Thursday in front of a House subcommittee in support of his legislation that would automatically enroll eligible veterans for five years of free health care in the VA medical system.

Mark Weiner's Washington Notebook appears Sunday in The Post-Standard. He can be reached at [mweiner@syracuse.com](mailto:mweiner@syracuse.com) or 571-970-3751.