Dear Editor,

You might be shocked to realize that New Yorkers do not have the right to clean air and water. But it’s an unfortunate truth that we all live with. While we have many rights here in New York, including the right to gamble, play BINGO, and the freedom to worship, we have yet to enshrine the most basic of rights into our state’s constitution – it’s called a Green Amendment – and it is commonsense legislation that helps communities attain and maintain the clean air and water they need to thrive and grow. Last year, New York passed the most aggressive climate legislation in the county, which provides a way for us to get to a future powered by renewable energy. A Green Amendment would complement this legislation by holding every government decision to a higher standard… a standard that asks a simple question – is this project safe for our air and our water?

The Green Amendment for New York is an eloquent 15 words: “Each person shall have the right to clean air and water, and a healthful environment.” Having this added to our State Constitution allows the public to hold their leaders accountable for their decisions. How refreshing is that!

A Green Amendment may have stopped the Norlite plant in Cohoes from burning toxic firefighting foam laden with PFAS chemicals. It may have spared folks in Hoosick Falls decades of drinking poisoned water. And it may have stopped the chemical 1,4-dioxane from contaminating much of Long Island’s groundwater.

Polluters are going to pollute if nothing stands in their way. A Green Amendment will empower New Yorkers to stand up for their environmental rights and force decisionmakers to consider the facts, impacts and science.