

Senate passes tech bill

Measure would provide \$280B, some for LI sites

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WASHINGTON — A massive tech bill that passed the U.S. Senate on Wednesday, and is poised for final passage in the House this week, could help usher in a new generation of technology jobs on Long Island, said Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.).

Schumer, speaking to Newsday shortly after the Senate voted in favor of a sweeping \$280 billion package aimed at boosting the domestic production of semiconductor chips and other emerging technologies, said the package will direct millions in federal funding to academic institutions, including the Brookhaven National Laboratory in Upton, Stony Brook University and Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory.

“Investments in science create the good-paying jobs, and with heavy investment in our Long Island scientific institutions, new companies are going to spring up and people are going to come here,” Schumer said. “People on



Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) talks about the \$280 billion “CHIPS and Science Act.”

Long Island who are now in their 50s, their grandchildren will have good paying jobs because of this legislation.”

The package — which has had various iterations and names over the past year — is meant to combat China’s growing influence in the tech industry and to address the shortage of microchips, largely made overseas, that led to the production slowdown of other Ameri-

can-made products, including cars and home appliances.

The measure passed the Senate with rare bipartisan support in a 64-33 vote. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), in a letter to lawmakers last week, said she expected to bring the bill forward for a vote this week, noting there has been bipartisan support in the chamber.

President Joe Biden on Monday had urged Congress to de-

liver a bill to his desk “promptly.” On Wednesday he lauded the Senate passage of the “CHIPS and Science Act,” saying upon final passage “it will mean more resilient American supply chains, so we are never so reliant on foreign countries for the critical technologies that we need for American consumers and national security.”

Schumer said he “helped craft this bill with Long Island

in mind,” noting the existing scientific research hubs and universities in the area.

“With Stony Brook [University] being one of the leading scientific research universities in the country, and Brookhaven only being one of the handful of Department of Energy labs, we are just well poised to get a good chunk of this money,” Schumer said.

Schumer’s office said the institutions will be eligible to apply for funding for different programs, including \$14.7 billion that will be made available over the next five years to support the 17 Department of Energy National Laboratories across the country.

“This is a jobs bill as much as it is a critical investment in science that will mean new opportunity and sustained economic strength here on Long Island,” said Kyle Strober, executive director of the Association for a Better Long Island.

Richard Reeder, vice president for research for Stony Brook University, said in a statement that the measure “will help increase American competitiveness in semiconductor [research and development] and manufacturing while at the same time boosting New York companies and research universities like Stony Brook University.”

PSEG questioned on storm computer issues

BY MARK HARRINGTON
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LIPA trustees at a board meeting Wednesday expressed renewed frustration that computer-system issues that plagued the utility after Tropical Storm Isaias may still linger, while criticizing PSEG for failing to send an official to the meeting to address their concerns in person.

Trustees were briefed Wednesday on the most recent findings of a LIPA Isaias task force, including “failures” with PSEG’s testing protocols for a newly implemented computer system to manage customer outages. The work has cost \$45 million since Isaias, LIPA reported.

LIPA’s report, first reported in Newsday, said it was “difficult to tell whether the outage-management system works as it should”

after discovering 36% of LIPA’s own tests using PSEG’s testing methodology “have failed to date” because of “inadequate documentation, poorly written test scripts and scripts that plainly do not work.”

PSEG took issue with the report, saying it had “successfully performed and completed all testing” using “industry best practices under the observation of LIPA” and state regulators.

The LIPA tests are a prelude to full-system stress tests that LIPA still must conduct to be certain PSEG’s newly installed computer system works following a series of failures during Tropical Storm Isaias, which saw 535,000 customers lose power for up to a week.

“This is just terrifying that we’re two years removed and can have a storm next week and

we don’t have a functional outage management system,” LIPA vice chairman Mark Fischl said.

LIPA chief executive Tom Falcone noted that failure of the tests doesn’t necessarily mean the system doesn’t work. Indeed, PSEG has said the new system has functioned properly in recent heat storms that saw thousands of outages.

“Well, we don’t know if it’s functional or not,” Falcone said. “We’re not saying it doesn’t work, we’re not saying it does work . . . We don’t know.”

PSEG has said LIPA’s testing of the system “did not demonstrate that the system was not functional, but rather that the LIPA testers could not execute the test scripts without assistance.” PSEG said its tests “were developed to be executed by individuals with strong knowledge of

business processes and outage management system functionality,” and said it would “continue to provide” support and training to LIPA and consultants.

LIPA task force member Osman Ahmad called PSEG’s explanation a “rationalization” and said it’s industry standard to have tests that can be run “independently” by those other than the developers.

More frustrating to some trustees was that PSEG officials weren’t on hand at the meeting to answer their questions.

“I note this is the first board meeting that I’ve ever attended where there is no representative of PSEG present,” said trustee Elkan Abramowitz, noting LIPA’s contract requires PSEG officials be present “if requested.”

“I want this comment to be clear, that we request that they

be at every board meeting,” Abramowitz said. “We wasted 15 minutes here trying to interpret what they’re doing when they could have answered it” directly.

Added trustee Sheldon Cohen, “I think we’re wasting a lot of time, it’s frustrating listening to this without the other side of the story.” He called it “imperative” that PSEG officials be at “every meeting at a minimum to be accountable for these results.”

Fischl during a board committee meeting raised questions about PSEG’s computer technology staffing levels.

Greg Filipkowski, chief information officer for PSEG, said the company was “making good progress in filling a lot of our openings” and added, “While these permanent full-time positions are still open, we are actively recruiting for them.”