



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on December 21, 2023

NY Democrats Introduce Bill to Force Rest-area Chick-fil-A Locations to Open on Sundays

In their ongoing war against one of the few major corporations that doesn't toe the liberal line, New York Democrats are trying to force certain Chick-fil-A locations in their state to open on Sundays.

Sponsored by Assemblyman Tony Simone of Manhattan and cosponsored by four other Democrats, bill [A08336](#) would require food services at New York Thruway rest areas to "be provided every day of the week." The only exceptions are for "temporary concessions or events" such as farmers markets.



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"It's Sunday, Christmas Eve ... thousands of New Yorkers are traveling to their families to find restaurants at rest areas across the state," Simone told [News10 ABC](#). "You know, we get hungry when we're traveling. We may not like our brother-in-law or sister-in-law's cooking and wanna get a snack on Christmas Eve. To find one of the restaurants closed on the Thruway is just not in the public good."

Does Simone have any particular restaurant in mind? Yes, indeed. His bill mentions one and only one restaurant by name: "Chick-fil-A, which by company policy is closed on Sundays, and which has already opened at seven service areas."

The New York State Thruway Authority is in the midst of a \$450-million project to remodel its rest areas. The authority contracted with Irish convenience-store chain Applegreen to operate the areas. Applegreen, in turn, contracted with food-service companies to provide dining for travelers stopping at the areas.

One of those companies is Chick-fil-A, whose [policy](#) since it began in 1946 is to close on Sunday "to allow Operators and their team members to enjoy a day of rest, be with their families and loved ones, and worship if they choose."

A08336 states: "While there is nothing objectionable about a fast food restaurant closing on a particular day of the week, service areas dedicated to travelers is [sic] an inappropriate location for such a restaurant. Publicly owned service areas should use their space to maximally benefit the public. Allowing for retail space to go unused one seventh of the week or more is a disservice and unnecessary inconvenience to travelers who rely on these service areas."

Of course, while the land on which the rest areas sit may belong to the state, the rest areas themselves "were built with no toll or tax dollars," a Thruway official told News10. Are they really "publicly owned"? Shouldn't it, rather, be the concern of those who have sunk their own capital into the rest areas to ensure that their space is used to its greatest advantage?

In fact, a Thruway Authority [statement](#) to New York's Spectrum news, explained, "as part of the new 33-year contract to manage these facilities, Applegreen is required to have at least one hot and cold



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food option available 24 hours a day at all locations. Chick-fil-A's Sunday closure is a brand requirement which Applegreen factored into their tenant plan. When the project is complete, Chick-fil-A will operate in less than half of the service areas on the Thruway — all of which have at least one other food concept and a convenience store open seven days a week with up to three additional concepts and a convenience store at the largest and highest volume locations.”

In other words, Simone is making a mountain out of a chicken nugget.

But that assumes he is really concerned about travelers' stomachs rather than about punishing Chick-fil-A. Assembly Democrats, after all, [tried](#) to keep the Georgia-based restaurant chain from being allowed to open in Thruway rest stops because of its alleged “long and controversial history of opposing the rights of LGBTQ+ individuals and families” — by which they meant the company supported Christian causes which, naturally, are opposed to the LGBT agenda.

Simone, too, made it clear that his attack on Chick-fil-A was about more than just its operating days. In a statement to Spectrum, he said, “not only does Chick-Fil-A have a long shameful history of opposing LGBTQ rights, it simply makes no sense for them to be a provider of food services in busy travel plazas.”

“A company, that by policy, is closed on one of the busiest travel days of the week should not be the company that travelers have to rely on for food services,” he added.

State Senator Michelle Hinchey, a Democrat who is sponsoring a [duplicate bill](#) in the upper house, stuck to the hungry-travelers script in her statement: “We need to ensure that [rest stops] remain reliable hubs, especially on the busiest travel days of the year. If one of the main food options closes for just one day, it not only inconveniences travelers but also puts a significant strain on the food spots that are open, leading to longer wait times.”

Travelers, however, were not fooled, as [CNY Central](#) discovered when it interviewed people at the Chittenango rest area:

“I think they're taking away their right of choice,” said Daniel Locke, a truck driver for MXC. “This is a country of free enterprise. Just because they're closed on Sundays, I don't think they should ban them.”

“It's perfectly fine,” added Mike Brandel, who drives trucks for Edmund Trucking. “There's Burger King, Popeyes, [or] you can get off the highway.”

Even if the bill passes the Democrat-dominated Legislature and is signed by Democratic Governor Kathy Hochul, it may be a long time before Chick-fil-A has to worry about it. It only applies to future food-service contracts — which, for Chick-fil-A, could be [decades away](#).



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