

LD 1949: ENERGY FAIRNESS ACT

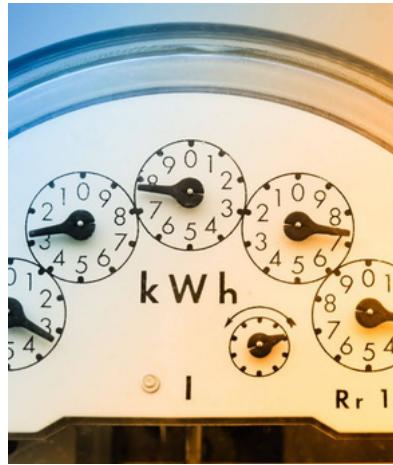
Fight for the rights of Maine families to be free from dangerous service shutoffs and rising utility costs.

Extreme weather, the soaring price of natural gas, and current utility policies have made electricity unaffordable for too many Maine people.

- In 2023, Maine electric utilities sent 440,000 disconnection notices to Maine families.¹ They made over \$200 million in profit in the same year.²
- Low-income Mainers spend 14% of their income on household energy costs, more than twice what is considered affordable.³
- Over the past five years, Maine had the fastest-rising electricity costs in the nation. Volatile natural gas prices, climate-fueled storm damage, and utility profit structure have been primary drivers of these increases.



It's long past time for everyone in Maine to have the energy they need to reach their potential.



- Maine is at a critical inflection point, where we must invest to make our electric grid cleaner and more resilient, while also making energy more affordable for families and small businesses.
- Universal access to electricity is imperative to a just transition to a clean economy and to meeting our statutory climate goals.
- Transitioning to clean electricity through Maine's Renewable Portfolio Standard is delivering enormous investment, \$21.5 million a year in ratepayer benefits, and cleaner air that protects our health—yet low-income Mainers remain vulnerable.⁴
- While electric utilities can't disconnect customers during the winter or extreme weather, there are no year round protections for people who need electricity. Even those with chronic illness can lose access to medically-necessary electricity after a three month period.

Maine can take big steps to lower bills and fight for universal electricity access by addressing the real drivers of rising costs.

- This bill would expand protections from utility disconnection to include people with chronic medical conditions -- because no one should have to choose between keeping the lights on and securing medicine.
- It would require utilities to report data on disconnections and customer debt, providing the public and policymakers the information we need to fight for universal electricity access.
- The bill would also require the Public Utilities Commission to consider the affordability of electric rates when considering whether to approve requests from utilities for rate increases.
- And this bill would lower Maine families' bills by capping utilities' ability to pass along unnecessary legal and lobbying costs to ratepayers.

Establish energy rights. Lower costs and protect Maine people.

For more information, please contact

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1. <https://www.maine.gov/meopa/about/news/maine-public-advocate-urges-low-income-electric-customers-seek-help-bills>

2. E.g., https://s24.q4cdn.com/489945429/files/doc_downloads/2024/11/CMP-FERC-Form-1-2023.pdf; https://elibrary.ferc.gov/eLibrary/filelist?accession_number=20240722-8002

3. https://www.maine.gov/meopa/sites/maine.gov.meopa/files/inline-files/VEIC_Maine%20Energy%20Burden%20and%20Affordability%202024_2.pdf

4. <https://www.maine.gov/energy/sites/maine.gov.energy/files/inline-files/Maine-RPS-Impacts-and-Procurement-Policy-Options-Report-Master-FINAL.pdf>



Environmental Priorities Coalition

Maine's Environmental Priorities Coalition is an inclusive statewide alliance of 40 conservation, climate action, and public health organizations. Each year we collectively identify a slate of policy priorities to act on the climate crisis, further environmental justice, protect land, water, and wildlife, and cultivate healthy Maine communities.



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