

PLEASE NOTE: Legislative Information **cannot** perform research, provide legal advice, or interpret Maine law. For legal assistance, please contact a qualified attorney.

An Act To Provide Transparency in Electricity Pricing for Maine Ratepayers

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:

Sec. 1. 35-A MRSA §102, sub-§24 is enacted to read:

24. Zero-based budgeting. "Zero-based budgeting" means a method of budgeting in which programs and activities are justified for a budgetary period using cost-benefit analysis without regard to the amount that was budgeted for those programs and activities in a prior budgetary period.

Sec. 2. 35-A MRSA §116, sub-§2, as amended by PL 2007, c. 16, §2, is further amended to read:

2. Committee recommendations; legislative approval of budget. The commission shall submit its budget recommendations, using a zero-based budgeting process, as part of the unified current services budget legislation in accordance with Title 5, sections 1663 to 1666. The commission shall make a presentation of its budget recommendations contained in any current services budget legislation and any supplemental budget legislation to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over public utilities matters. The joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over public utilities matters shall review the commission's recommendations and make recommendations to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over appropriations and financial affairs regarding the budget of the commission, including but not limited to all expenditures from the fund established pursuant to this section. The commission shall make an annual report in accordance with section 120 of its planned expenditures for the year and on its use of funds in the previous year. In addition to the assessments authorized under this section, the commission may also receive other funds as appropriated or allocated by the Legislature.

Sec. 3. 35-A MRSA §116, sub-§8, ¶A, as amended by PL 1997, c. 424, Pt. B, §5, is further amended to read:

A. The Public Advocate shall submit its budget recommendations, using a zero-based budgeting process, as part of the unified current services budget legislation in accordance with Title 5, sections 1663 to ~~1665~~1666. The assessments and expenditures provided in this section are subject to legislative approval. The Public Advocate shall make an annual report of its planned expenditures for the year and on its use of funds in the previous year. The Public Advocate may also receive other funds as appropriated by the Legislature.

Sec. 4. 35-A MRSA §315 is enacted to read:

§ 315. Transparency in electricity rates and assessments

1. Transparency in electricity rates and assessments; commission and Office of the Public Advocate. The commission and the Office of the Public Advocate shall post on their publicly accessible websites a detailed explanation of the total impact to ratepayers, in millions of dollars per year, of all components of ratepayers' rates and prices, including all supply and transmission and delivery charges and all additional state and federal government charges and assessments, including but not limited to charges to fund the low-income assistance program described in section 3214, the commission and the Office of the Public Advocate; system benefits charges with revenues dedicated to the Efficiency Maine Trust, established in section 10103; stranded costs from long-term contracts; and charges for the State's renewable resource portfolio requirement established under section 3210.

2. Transparency in electricity rates and assessments; transmission and distribution utilities. All transmission and distribution utilities shall include a line-item accounting on ratepayers' statements that provides a total of all additional state and federal government charges and assessments, including but not limited to charges to fund the low-income assistance program described in section 3214, the commission and the Office of the Public Advocate; system benefits charges with revenues dedicated to the Efficiency Maine Trust, established in section 10103; stranded costs from long-term contracts; and assessments for the State's renewable resource portfolio requirement established under section 3210.

SUMMARY

This bill provides pricing transparency to electricity ratepayers to show the total financial impact to ratepayers from electricity supply, transmission and delivery and state and federal government assessments. It requires the Public Utilities Commission and the Public Advocate to submit their budget recommendations as part of the unified current services budget legislation using a zero-based budgeting process.