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An Act To Examine Electric Utility Regulation and Fees To Reduce Rates

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

Sec. 1. 5 MRSA §12004-I, sub-§93 is enacted to read:

93.

Public Advocate

Not Authorized

35-A MRSA §1713

Electric Rate
Evaluation Council

Sec. 2. 35-A MRSA §1713 is enacted to read:

§ 1713. Electric Rate Evaluation Council

1. Establishment. The Electric Rate Evaluation Council, as established by Title 5, section 12004-I, subsection 93 and referred to in this section as "the council," is created to provide periodic review of the factors that influence electric rates, including electricity purchase costs, transmission and distribution costs, regulatory costs, taxes and fees.

2. Members. The council is composed of:

A. The Public Advocate; and

B. Six members appointed by the Governor to serve 3-year terms that expire December 31st:

(1) One member who is a representative of a large, investor-owned transmission and distribution utility as defined in section 3201, subsection 12;

(2) One member who is a representative of a competitive electricity provider as defined in section 3201, subsection 5;

(3) One member who is a representative of an eligible small generator as defined in section 3201, subsection 8-A;

(4) One member who is a representative of a large industrial consumer of electricity;

(5) One member who is a representative of a small business; and

(6) One person who is a representative of residential electricity customers.

Members under paragraph B may be reappointed for subsequent terms. A vacancy must be filled for the remainder of the unexpired term in the same manner as an original appointment.

3. Chair. The Public Advocate is chair of the council.

4. Duties. The council shall gather and compile information regarding the factors that influence electric rates, including electricity purchase costs, transmission and distribution costs, regulatory costs, taxes and fees. The council shall recommend a process that provides for an evaluation of those costs, taxes and fees every 5 years and shall make recommendations to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over energy, utilities and technology matters for repeal of any taxes, fees or regulatory provisions that are not justified. The council may take any other appropriate actions consistent with the purposes of this section.

5. Staffing and expenses. The Public Advocate within budgeted resources shall provide reasonable staff support as requested by the council. Members of the council are not entitled to compensation as provided in Title 5, section 12004-I.

SUMMARY

This bill establishes the Electric Rate Evaluation Council to conduct a review of electric industry costs that go into the determination of electric rates and make recommendations to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over energy, utilities and technology matters for repeal of any taxes, fees or regulatory provisions that are not justified.