

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 Reduce Electric Rates for Maine Businesses

Emergency preamble. Whereas, acts and resolves of the Legislature do not become effective until 90 days after adjournment unless enacted as emergencies; and

Whereas, current law concerning the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative Trust Fund provides for the trust funds to be allocated at a certain percentage up through this fiscal year; and

Whereas, in order to continue allocation for the next series of fiscal years and to modify the percentage to a more business-friendly rate, it is necessary to amend this section of law before the next fiscal year, which begins in July; and

Whereas, in the judgment of the Legislature, these facts create an emergency within the meaning of the Constitution of Maine and require the following legislation as immediately necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health and safety; now, therefore,

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

Sec. 1. 35-A MRSA §10109, sub-§4, ¶A, as amended by PL 2013, c. 369, Pt. A, §15, is further amended to read:

A. During fiscal years ~~2013-14, 2014-15 and 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18 and 2018-19~~, not less than ~~50%~~10% of the trust funds received during those years must be allocated for measures, investments ~~and, loans, arrangements and technical assistance~~ that reduce electricity consumption or reduce greenhouse gas emissions and lower energy costs at commercial or industrial facilities, and 35% of the funds received by the trust fund during those years must be used for investment in measures that lower residential heating energy demand and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The measures that lower residential heating demand must be fuel-neutral and may include, but are not limited to, energy efficiency improvements to residential buildings and upgrades to efficient heating systems that will reduce residential energy costs and greenhouse gas emissions, as determined by the board. The trust shall transfer to the commission ~~15%~~55% of funds received by the trust fund during fiscal years ~~2013-14, 2014-15 and year~~ 2015-16, which the commission shall direct transmission and distribution utilities to disburse to business ratepayers in a manner that provides maximum benefit to the Maine economy. Subject to the apportionment pursuant to this subsection, the trust shall fund conservation programs that give priority to measures with the highest benefit-to-cost ratio, as long as cost-effective collateral efficiency opportunities are not lost, and that:

(1) Reliably reduce greenhouse gas production and heating energy costs by fossil fuel combustion in the State at the lowest cost in funds from the trust fund per unit of emissions; or

(2) Reliably reduce the consumption of electricity in the State at the lowest cost in funds from the trust fund per kilowatt-hour saved.

Emergency clause. In view of the emergency cited in the preamble, this legislation takes effect when approved.

SUMMARY

This bill increases the amount of Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative Trust Fund revenue that is to be returned to business ratepayers. Currently 15% of the funds are returned to businesses, and this bill increases it to 55%. The bill adds loans and technical assistance to the required uses of the allocated funds, which also include measures, investments and arrangements that reduce electricity consumption or reduce greenhouse gas emissions and lower energy costs at commercial or industrial facilities. It changes the percent allocated for those measures from 50% to 10% and adds the fiscal years of 2016-17, 2017-18 and 2018-19 for funds to be allocated.