

Maine State Legislature

Committee On Energy, Utilities and Technology

Did you know that the system to regulate utilities is a hundred years old? At the beginning of the 20th century when electric power was first distributed to the public the current system was developed for utility regulation. The system MPUC and other state regulators use to arbitrate between customers and utilities was actually developed by the utilities themselves and is slanted in favor of the utilities interests and to the detriment of their customers. If you have the opportunity or displeasure to sit in on a case hearing common words are “best practices” or “industry standards”. The entire process is governed by narratives that utilities inserted at the inception of the regulators.

Year after year your committee, MPUC and the Office of Public Advocate play whack a mole trying to strike a balance between consumers and utilities. The results only produce endless work for all parties involved but little for the actual consumers of electricity. The system which was developed when people were first converting from kerosene lamps to electric lightbulbs is antiquated and incapable of providing what Maine needs in the 21st century.

The answer is an overhaul of the entire system and it begins with the state helping customers set the expectations for reliable and affordable power. Utilities should work for us and be accountable to the consumers both large and small. Utilities should be given clear parameters to provide and recompensed according to performance. The last thing we should be concerned with is “best practices” and “industry standards” set by those who are failing to provide affordable and reliable electricity. It is time for the State of Maine to control the narratives when licensing utilities to operate in our state. Ask yourselves what should the narratives be for the 21st century and expect the utilities to communicate accordingly. Every new law and regulation should be determined according to what we expect from our grid providers. Maine has had the worst reliability and highest costs for too long and it has little to do with the number of trees or climate variability. Our problem is related to utility “narratives” “best practices” and “industry standards” . Make them our standards!

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