



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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January 9, 2024

Senator Lawrence, Representative Zeigler, fellow members of the Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology, I'm Steve Foster, Representative for House District 32, serving the residents of Charleston, Dexter, Exeter, Garland, Stetson, and a part of Bradford, here to testify in support of LD1465, "An Act to Amend the Calculation of Tariff Rates and Billing Credits Under Net Energy Billing". There is only one basic reason I'll offer for passing this bill and, in spite of other things you may hear in opposition, it's the same reason you may choose to defeat it.

One of the first bills we heard in the 129th Legislature related to Net Energy Billing was put forward by then EUT House Chair Rep. Berry. That bill, LD91, would end Gross Metering, a billing method developed by the PUC to require those participating in the program to pay for their use of the distribution system. The committee and the Legislature passed the bill, deciding that other ratepayers should pay those charges instead.

A few months later, the committee heard the so-called Dow Solar Bill, LD1711. This bill would greatly expand Net Energy Billing opportunities in Maine. Although not an original bill sponsor, Chair Berry sat before the committee, flanked by the Natural Resources Council of Maine's lead energy lobbyist, working with our Analyst, putting the final touches on the bill, which would later be passed by the 129th and signed into law. Now, the financial benefits originally intended for "roof top" solar projects would be greatly expanded and those costs would be covered by all CMP and Versant rate payers.

Several more bills have been passed by the last three Legislatures which have added costs to the electric bills of residential, business, and industrial customers. Although a few were intended to help the growing number of citizens struggling with paying their electric bills, most were designed to subsidize the expansion of renewable energy or electrification projects.

So, what's the one justification for passing LD1465? It's plain and simple, money. Passing this bill will allow Maine ratepayers to keep more of their money that is needed to pay the added cost of NEB now and for the next 20 years. Why will you vote to defeat this bill? Same answer, money.

No matter the many reasons you'll hear or give supporting NEB today, just as it's been in the past, the real reason is money. Each time it's been proposed over the years to let the PUC bid all solar projects required by legislation vs. requiring them to fill NEB quotas, those benefitting financially campaigned against it. Even though the PUC told this committee more than once that they could get all the solar needed at a much lower rate than NEB, the committee and Legislature voted against it. The reason was not ideological, was not for lack of interested contractors, or anything else, but money.

It's quite ironic that those who have argued we need to keep Maine rate payer dollars in Maine instead of spending them on out of state oil and gas are quite content to charge ratepayers extra, to the benefit of out of state investors and hedge funds.

In conclusion, my reason for supporting this bill is money, that of the ratepayers I represent. I was sent here to protect their interests, not those of the solar industry, the various environmental groups, or anyone else that is benefitting from the unnecessary windfall that is Net Energy Billing. I hope you'll agree.

Respectfully submitted,
Steve Foster
State Representative