

Senator Lawrence, Representative Berry, and members of the Joint Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology. My name is Judy Berk and I live in Northport. I am here today, speaking in strong support of LD 1708, an act allow Maine people vote on An Act To Create the Pine Tree Power Company, a Nonprofit Utility, To Deliver Lower Rates, Reliability and Local Control for Maine Energy Independence.

If these profit-driven companies had not failed Maine so miserably and completely, believe me, I would not spend this beautiful spring day testifying before you. I believe you have an excellent solution in the bill before you today.

I've been a close observer of Maine's electric companies since in the 1970s when I worked with the Maine Office of Energy Resources and wrote a newspaper column called "Power Play" for three Maine weekly papers.

Over the next decades I watched from the sidelines as the former Bangor Hydro and CMP fought to gut efforts to help Maine people and businesses improve energy efficiency, use clean renewable energy resources, and save money on power bills.

It has only gotten worse as CMP got swallowed up by Avangrid, which got swallowed up by Iberdola. CMP is now wholly-owned by Iberdrola, a company based in Spain, whose largest shareholders are government banks in Spain, Qatar, Norway.

And, Bangor Hydro got swallowed by Emera, which got swallowed by Versant, wholly-owned by the government of Calgary, Canada.

Long ago, the state of Maine granted these companies a monopoly to run our electric grid. It should come as no surprise that especially since these corporate takeovers, these profit-driven utilities have increasingly failed to act in Maine's interest.

CMP and Versant serve their shareholders, not us. We are their captive cash cow and they are laughing all the way to the bank. In 2020, CMP extracted 16% net income on its no risk monopoly from Mainer's pockets. Good for them, bad for us. No wonder they are putting up a fight!

I'm here today as a private citizen who believes it is my obligation to help ensure future generations of Mainers can thrive and I know electricity is the lifeblood of our households and businesses. Maine needs to prepare its grid for the future, and dig ourselves out of a hole too. With a consumer-owned utility, what we'd save on profits, corporate salaries, bond rates, storm clean ups, and more can go towards keeping rates down while improving service and preparing for our electrified future.

It doesn't take a rocket scientist to see that the investor-owned utilities with a monopoly to deliver power to Maine have failed us.

- Maine sees the [worst and longest outages in the nation](#)

- Both CMP and Versant rank at the very bottom of the entire nation for customer satisfaction, according to [J.D. Power's authoritative survey](#). CMP is ranked worst of all 142 utilities ranked, and Versant third worst.
- Despite this extremely poor service, Mainers pay the [10th highest rates](#) in the nation, sending hundreds of millions of hard earned dollars to the owners of these multi-national companies. Versant, [Maine's most expensive](#) mainland utility, now [seeks](#) a 25.4% rate hike.

It's past time to improve electricity reliability, ensure local control, cut costs and embrace clean energy for Maine. I hope you share my enthusiasm for this opportunity.

Maine voters elected you. I urge you to let the voters decide if a customer-driven utility or a profit-driven one will best serve Maine's interests.

Thank you for your time and your service.

Judy Berk
Northport

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