



# HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## **Testimony of Representative Nathan Carlow before Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology**

May 20, 2021

*In support of L.D. 1708, An Act To Create The Pine Tree Power Company, a Nonprofit Utility,  
To Deliver Lower Rates, Reliability and Local Control from Maine Energy Independence*

Thank you, Senator Lawrence, and distinguished colleagues on the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology.

I am Representative Nathan Carlow, I hail from the great town of Buxton, and I am honored to represent House District 16 in the Maine State Legislature.

I am before the Committee today in strong support of L.D. 1708, and in a few moments, I will share how and why I agreed to cosponsor this bill. Before I do so, however, I want to express dismay in the deceitful statements that have been made by the political arms of those in opposition to this bill. These lies and half-truths will not thwart a rigorous public debate on the merits of this subject, and they will certainly not conceal the atrocious record of Maine's investor-owned utilities.

This bill proposes consumer ownership of our power grid, and while some would have you believe this is a radical government takeover, the reality couldn't be further from the truth. This is not a new idea; 1 in 3 U.S. households are served by a COU, the entire State of Nebraska is served by a COU, and 97 towns all over Maine are served by a COU.

Unlike politicians, data is pretty hard to argue with, and the facts are clear: COUs are less costly to operate, they tend to be more reliable, and since they are not-for-profit, investment goes to where its needed, not into the pockets of foreign companies and foreign governments. I've heard many times that government shouldn't own our power grid, and on this point, I agree wholeheartedly, but what the lobby wants you to forget is that government already owns our power grid. The City of Calgary, in Alberta, Canada, has 100% ownership of Versant, and Avangrid's parent company, Iberdrola, is owned by foreign governments all around the globe, including Qatar, Norway, and Spain.

Monopolies that the State shields from competition should be held to a high standard, but we've been ranked worst nationally in reliability and customer service, and to add insult to injury, we have among the highest rates. Time and again, we've given our IOUs time to get caught up to speed, and now my constituents are tired of giving out third, fourth, and fifth chances; it's time to take seriously our obligation to protect ratepayers by establishing Pine Tree Power, a consumer owned utility working for Maine people, not foreign investors in other parts of the world.

I thank my colleagues for their consideration of this testimony, and I'd be delighted to answer any questions at this time.