



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Terrence Murphy

Senator Murphy to PSC: We will not be ignored

TERRENCE MURPHY October 4, 2018

| ISSUE: **PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION, NYSEG, STORM RESPONSE, UTILITY SERVICES, HUDSON VALLEY**



POUND RIDGE, NY - The Public Service Commission oversees New York's Department of Public Service. Their primary mission is to, "ensure affordable, safe, secure and reliable access" to electricity and other utility services. Residents of the 40th Senate District, especially NYSEG customers, say there is nothing reliable about their service provider. Now, State Senator Terrence Murphy is urging residents to [add their names to an online letter demanding the PSC take necessary action.](#)

The community letter comes after the Hudson Valley State Senator sent two previous letters to John Rhodes, the Chair for the Public Service Commission and CEO for New York's DPS. On August 16th and again on September 24th Murphy detailed separate episodes of power outages on days described by meteorologists as fog or light rain. Both letters demanded action of the regulatory agency and detailed the lack of faith NYSEG customers harbor for their utility company.

"I recognize and understand severe weather can cause outages but the PSC and NYSEG must recognize they are failing in their responsibility to deliver reliable power to its residents and customers," said Senator Murphy. "Our office has been inundated by complaints from NYSEG customers, some who have lost power more than ten times this year for unexplicable reasons. The PSC cannot continue to ignore us. It's time to hand the reigns over to a company that can keep the lights on. It's time to reopen the franchise in this region and provide the quality of life that residents deserve."

Senator Murphy reiterated that if the PSC is unwilling to act on behalf of NYSEG's customers, then they should be informed - in writing - why the PSC is not holding NYSEG accountable.

Murphy's demand is supported by an endless series of service interruptions, including:

- On October 29, 2017, the fifth anniversary of Superstorm Sandy, tropical storm Philippe tore through the Hudson Valley, producing high-speed winds, torrential rain, and hazardous flooding. NYSEG was ill prepared for the swath of destruction Philippe left behind, including extended power outages and downed live power lines that blocked roads and driveways for several days.

- On March 2, 2018, Winter Storm Riley walloped many areas in New York with over a foot of snow. The storm also caused extensive flooding and generated winds that topped out at nearly sixty miles per hour. The winds uprooted trees and snapped power lines, leaving thousands without power. Repair crews were late to respond and many customers were given inaccurate and unrealistic restoration times, remaining powerless for days instead of hours.
- On March 7, 2018, the region was subjected to a second winter storm, Quinn, which produced blizzard-like conditions and knocked out power for more than a hundred thousand additional customers. Once again, NYSEG kept customers in the dark about when the power would be restored. Customers still without power from Riley.

In response to residents' many questions, and in his capacity as Chairman of the New York State Senate's Committee on Investigations and Government Operations, Senator Terrence Murphy hosted hearings in Albany and Somers to explore preparedness for Riley and Quinn, as well as steps that could be taken to ensure this sort of situation never occurs again by utility companies and state agencies. The hearings did little to assuage public opinion that NYSEG could handle severe future weather events.

Furthemore, dozens of customers have been denied reimbursements from the outages, which in some cases totaled thousands of dollars. Senator Murphy's office has directly engaged the utility company to advocate on behalf of its constituents only to be denied with little to no explanation.

In June the New York State Senate passed S.7262 which would finally hold utility companies accountable in how they address power outages. Among the provisions, the legislation calls for a comprehensive review of reimbursement policies by the PSC. While it passed the Senate the legislation failed to come for a vote in the Assembly.