



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jen Metzger

## After Fighting Proposed NYSEG Rate Plan, Sen. Metzger Welcomes PSC Changes

JEN METZGER November 20, 2020

| ISSUE: **NYSEG RATE CASE, PROTECTING UTILITY RATEPAYERS**



**Albany, NY...**The NYS Public Service Commission (PSC) yesterday released an Order in the rate case of New York State Electric & Gas Company (NYSEG), which significantly reduces the proposed rate increase from nearly 25 percent over three years to less than six percent (two percent in the first year, 1.95 percent in the second year, and 1.99 percent in the third year). The decision to modify the Joint Proposal agreed to by the rate case parties this summer came after **significant criticism by Senator Metzger** in **comments** to the

Commission and in the press about raising rates amidst a pandemic and severe economic downturn that have left many of her constituents struggling to pay their bills. The PSC Order further requires that NYSEG provide emergency relief in the form of \$100 in bill credits to vulnerable residential and small business customers.

In addition to fighting the enormous rate hike alongside the Public Utility Law Project and AARP, Senator Metzger has also been advocating for increased investment to improve grid reliability, especially in Sullivan County, where power outages are frequent. Over the summer, Senator Metzger organized a meeting with NYSEG's CEO and staff that included local and county government officials from Sullivan County to impress on NYSEG the need to accelerate investments to replace antiquated circuits and beef up vegetation management along the power lines. Senator Metzger also pressed the PSC for changes to the Joint Proposal to better take into account these needs. Yesterday's PSC Order nearly doubles spending by NYSEG on vegetation management (increasing this budget item from \$30 million to \$57 million), which will reduce the incidence of power outages from downed trees and limbs. Moreover, the rate plan includes \$1.6 billion for grid upgrades, including replacing the notorious Yulan circuit in Sullivan County that is responsible for hundreds of power disruptions a year, according to local officials.

"I've been fighting this proposed rate increase since last year, and while I do not feel any rate increase is justified during this challenging time, the PSC has reduced the increase to a fraction of what the parties to this rate case agreed to, and this is a much-welcomed improvement," **said Senator Metzger (SD-42)**. "Moreover, the additional emergency bill credit for hard-hit residential and business customers will provide further relief. I am also pleased to see investments in new circuits and a near doubling of the required investment in vegetation management, which is absolutely essential to improving electricity reliability in the heavily wooded areas I represent, where downed trees and limbs cause the lion's share of

outages. Another welcome development in the rate plan is the addition of 150 linemen and women and 55 apprentice linemen and women. The company has been severely understaffed when it comes to boots on the ground, which among other things has slowed recovery from power outages."

On the environmental front, Senator Metzger expressed strong support for a provision of the new plan to achieve net-zero growth in gas sales and end promotion of gas services, focusing instead on incentivizing expanded use of heat pumps for heating and cooling, which are much more climate-friendly. Metzger was disappointed, however, that the PSC approved an increase in customer fixed charges from \$15.11 to \$17.00 per month, which disproportionately burdens customers who use less energy.

Senator Jen Metzger serves on the Senate Energy & Telecommunications Committee. Prior to entering the State Senate in 2019 she served as Director of Citizens for Local Power, a nonprofit organization that fights unfair utility rates and practices and helps communities shift to a clean energy economy.

*Jen Metzger represents the 42nd Senate District, which includes all of Sullivan County and parts of Delaware, Orange, and Ulster Counties. Senator Metzger serves as Chair of the Agriculture Committee and sits on the Environmental Conservation, Education, Health, Energy and Telecommunications, Local Government, Women's Issues, Domestic Animal Welfare, and Legislative Commission on Rural Resources Committees.*

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