



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Kevin Thomas

## Senator Kevin Thomas and Senate Majority Advance Major Legislation to Improve Utility Services

KEVIN THOMAS February 23, 2021

| ISSUE: [PSEG](#), [LONG ISLAND](#), [TROPICAL STORM ISAIAS](#)



(Albany, NY) - Senator Kevin Thomas and the Senate Democratic Majority today passed legislation to ensure the utility services New Yorkers depend on meet added criteria for safety and regulation. This package will extend the COVID-19 moratorium for utility service disconnections, hold utilities accountable for failures in restoring service, ensure that utility companies do not pass on the cost of legislative lobbying to customers, and clarify the medical equipment that qualifies for essential electric service. These bills will also assure

customers are compensated for service interruptions, provide a voice for consumer advocacy within the Public Service Commission and strengthen the standards for utility service provider's emergency response plans. In addition to these measures, this package will require new gas infrastructure projects to be approved by a professional engineer and add public oversight to the pay rates of top utility executives.

Senator Kevin Thomas said, "For far too long, utility companies have abused the trust that ratepayers and the state have put in them, particularly on Long Island. I'll never forget what PSEG put my constituents through during Tropical Storm Isaias. As Chairman of the Consumer Protection Committee, I have fought hard to ensure utility companies are held accountable when they fail to uphold their responsibility to deliver safe and reliable service to ratepayers. I want to thank Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins and my colleagues for stepping up to defend New York consumers by advancing this crucial package of legislation, which ensures that our utility companies put people over profits."

The legislation being passed by the Senate Majority, includes:

- Utility Moratorium: This bill, S.1453A sponsored by Senator Kevin Parker, will extend the moratorium on utility shut-offs until December 31st, 2021, or the COVID-19 state of emergency is lifted or expires.
- Protecting Customers Lobbying Costs: This bill, S.1556 sponsored by Senator Kevin Parker, will protect utility customers from unknowingly paying for lobbying activity, including for political activity that may influence policies that go against the best interest of the customers.
- Electricity Plan for Essential Medical Needs: This bill, S.931A sponsored by Senator Anna Kaplan, identifies the specific medical equipment that qualifies for essential electricity

and additional utility outreach during outages.

- **Utility Reimbursement:** This bill, S.929B sponsored by Senator Anna Kaplan, will provide consumers with a bill discount when a contracted service provider fails to provide the agreed upon service.
- **Utility Consumer Advocacy in the Public Service Commission :** This bill, S.1199 sponsored by Senator Michael Gianaris, will require at least one commissioner of the public service commission to have experience in advocating in the interests of utility consumers.
- **Emergency Response Plan Requirement:** This bill, S.968 sponsored by Senator James Gaughran, will establish the criteria for the Long Island Power Authority and its service provider's emergency response plans, and subject them to review, approval and enforcement by the Public Service Commission.
- **Stronger Utility Storm Response:** This bill, S.4960 sponsored by Senator Shelley Mayer, will remove restrictions on the Public Service Commission's ability to penalize utility company violations and will enhance oversight of utilities to ensure improved storm planning and response.
- **Professional Engineer Approval Requirement:** This bill, S.544 sponsored by Senator Todd Kaminsky, will require a professional engineer to review and approve a gas infrastructure project to prevent public utility accidents from occurring in New York.
- **Public Statements of Compensation:** This bill, S.1544A sponsored by Senator Todd Kaminsky, will require large utility companies to publicly report the annual pay of their top employees.
- **Reimbursement for Lost Food or Medicine:** This bill, S.3784A, sponsored by Senator Leroy Comrie, will provide a customer reimbursement for lost food or medicine due to an extended power outage.

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