



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Lea Webb

Senator Webb and the Senate Majority Passes Legislation Protecting Ratepayers

LEA WEBB May 18, 2023

| ISSUE: **PROTECTING UTILITY RATEPAYERS**

Utilities Need to be Accountable to Their Customers

Senator Webb and the Senate Majority Passes Legislation Protecting Ratepayers

(BINGHAMTON, NY) Senator Webb and the Senate Democratic Majority passed legislation to further protect ratepayers across New York State. This legislation continues the work of the Senate Majority to

eliminate price surging and hold utility companies accountable. Last year the State Senate Investigations Committee conducted a study into utility price surges and this legislation package works to address those findings. This package of bills will address utility storm response, protect property owners, improve utility payment plans, and protect ratepayers from unfair practices.

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“Utility companies have an obligation to provide their services to ratepayers at a reasonable price and to deliver high-quality and consistent customer service,” **said Senator Lea Webb**. “Not all utility providers and municipalities are currently required to notify a property owner of scheduled services that might impact their property. My legislation requires utility companies to communicate in a timely manner and provide comprehensive notice to homeowners at least 5 days before any scheduled services that would interfere with their ability to use or access their property. The package of legislation we passed today provides some important protections and resources for consumers, many of whom are still struggling to find financial stability.”

The legislation passed by Senator Webb and the Senate Democratic Majority includes:

- **Notification to Property Owners:** This bill, [S5130](#), sponsored by **Senator Lea Webb** would require corporations and municipal utilities to notify property owners prior to beginning scheduled service work that may interfere with a property owner's ability to enjoy, use, or access such property owner's property.
- **Accurate Meter Readings:** This bill, [S1851A](#), sponsored by Senator Michelle Hinchey, directs utilities to file with the Public Service Commission a model procedure for calculating estimated utility bills and to use more actual meter readings.
- **Strengthen Utility Storm Response and Compliance:** This bill, [S4882](#), sponsored by Senator Shelley Mayer would incentivize better regulatory compliance by utilities through increased flexibility for the Public Service Commission to assess penalties on utilities for violations of the Public Service Law, and to expand emergency response plan requirements.
- **Utilities to Adopt the Common Equity Ratio:** This bill, [S6557A](#), sponsored by Senator Shelley Mayer would require electric corporations, gas corporations, steam corporations and water-works corporations to use standardized return on equity calculations set by the public service commission to prevent unjustifiable rate increases.
- **Utility Payment Plans:** This bill, [S1199A](#), sponsored by Senator Kevin Parker would establish minimum standards for payment plans for eligible customers; requires the public service commission to

set standards for payment plans for certain customers including reasonableness of agreements and timelines for payment; establishes eligibility.

- **Affordable Payment Plans:** This bill, [S1200A](#), sponsored by Senator Kevin Parker would require utility companies headquartered in New York to establish a statewide program to provide eligible participants with affordable payment plans.
- **Limits Fixed Charges:** This bill, [S1303](#), sponsored by Senator Kevin Parker would direct the Department of Public Service to adjust each utility corporation's residential fixed charge upon such corporation's filing with the Department of rate schedule amendments, to recover only the fixed costs and operation and maintenance expenses directly related to metering, billing, service connections and the provision of customer service.
- **Utility Intervenor Reimbursement:** This bill, [S405](#), sponsored by Senator Kevin Parker would authorize 'intervenor' who advocate on behalf of resident and small business consumers to apply for reimbursement for the costs attributable with participation in a Public Service Commission rate-making proceeding.
- **Civil Penalties for False Statements:** This bill, [S6710](#), sponsored by Senator James Skoufis would establish civil penalties for utilities that knowingly make false material statements to the Public Service Commission in relation to a rate-making proceeding.

In addition to passing this package of legislation, Senator Webb has published a short survey on her Senate website to collect information on the impact of rising utility costs on residents of Broome, Tompkins and Cortland counties. The goal of the survey is to address the community's needs head-on and ensure more equitable access to public utilities.

Community members living in Senate District 52 are encouraged to participate in the survey, which can be found on Senator Webb's website: <https://www.nysenate.gov/senators/lea-webb>

The survey will be open until June 15th, 2023.

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