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This was in the **Buffalo News** today. I am quoted further down in the article. It also references a piece I did that was in the **Buffalo News** last month.

~ Justin Wilcox

## Utilities Say State Should Be Clearer About Energy Charges

- [Matt Glynn](#)
- 1 hr ago

Gov. Kathy Hochul is calling for utilities to be clear about what customers are paying for in their bills.

Some utilities say they agree – but for a different reason. They argue that there should be more transparency on how the cost of state mandates and climate change laws are driving up utility bills. As part of Hochul's State of the State agenda, the Governor's Office is directing the state Department of Public Service to review utility bills to ensure customers "never foot the bill for inappropriate utility spending, including corporate advertising, fines and certain legal fees."

Some utilities say the state ought to be transparent about costs they are required to pass along to ratepayers.

"Greater transparency helps New Yorkers understand what is really driving affordability concerns, including unregulated energy suppliers and state-mandated fees, which together can account for more than half of a customer's bill and have nothing to do with investments in the poles, people and wires that keep New Yorker's lights on and homes warm," said Kimberly Harriman, deputy CEO of Avangrid, the parent company of New York State Electric & Gas.

"We look forward to working with the governor and the Legislature to shine a bright light on all the components and companies that contribute extensive charges and fees to every customer bill," she said.

National Fuel Gas said it also favors greater transparency.

"We welcome efforts that help customers better understand their bills and cost drivers," the utility said in a statement. "Our leadership team is committed to aligning company performance with customer value, ensuring that decisions prioritize affordability, reliability, and safety for the communities we serve."

National Fuel said its delivery rates remain the lowest in the state and "have risen far less than inflation. Thanks to nearby Pennsylvania supplies, customer bills remain significantly lower than two decades ago."

Energy bills have been rising sharply over the past year.

National Fuel, under a rate plan approved by the state Public Service Commission in December 2024, raised its rates twice in 2025. Those hikes – National Fuel's first since 2017 – increased the company's delivery charges by more than 26%.

National Grid received PSC approval for a three-year rate agreement that will see the average customer's bill increase by a total of \$25 a month by the end of the deal.

NYSEG is seeking a one-year rate hike to increase a typical customer's electric bills by \$33 per month, or 24%, in 2026, though it also is open to a multiyear deal to spread out the impact. It has

said it needs to upgrade an aging system of power lines, substations and electricity transmission materials as the demand for power is expected to rise.

The New York Power Authority's board recently approved rate hikes mainly affecting customers of municipal and rural electrical systems.

In a commentary last month, Justin Wilcox, executive director of the business advocacy group Upstate United, said state lawmakers should be up-front about their role in driving up utility bills.

"The reality they have been deflecting from is simple: The Legislature has been adding billions of dollars in new mandates and climate-related spending to ratepayers through utility bills, rather than through the state budget process," Wilcox wrote. "Now that these costs are showing up as double-digit increases for many of their constituents, state legislators are abandoning responsibility."

Upstate United supports the Ratepayer Transparency Act. The legislation would create a separate category on utility bills for charges approved by the PSC that have a statewide impact.

A focal point of the debate over energy costs is the state's climate law, officially called the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act, that was signed in 2019. The law steers the state toward greater reliance on renewable energy and less dependence on fossil fuels. Environmentalists have called the law vital to combating climate change. Business groups want the CLCPA to be suspended for 10 years.

A state Department of Public Service report published in September details how climate law-related costs impact customers' bills. The report forecast that the CLCPA in 2025 would account for 7.1% of a National Grid customer's typical residential monthly electric bill, 5.9% of a typical NYSEG customer's residential electric bill, and 0.9% of a typical National Fuel customer's residential gas bill.

The state DPS in its report said utility rates are the main source of funding to achieve the climate law's goals. The agency said its report shows that climate law-related costs "are a component of utility rates, but remain a small portion of the total bill."

The DPS said other factors driving up rates are investments necessary to keep power infrastructure safe and reliable; growing customer demand for electricity; and rising commodity prices.

Heather Mulligan, president and CEO of the Business Council of New York State, urged caution about "additional mandates on utility companies without also acknowledging the high burden of fees and regulatory requirements already imposed on providers."

"Addressing affordability and providing relief to consumers must go beyond a headline and come with an acknowledgment of the underlying cost drivers," Mulligan said.

Hochul plans to introduce legislation requiring utilities to create and report an "affordability index," showing the energy burden on customers in a utility's service territory. The DPS would be required to report on utility affordability, benchmark against data from other states, and make an annual presentation to the PSC.

Hochul has also called for requiring utilities to disclose how their CEOs' salaries compare to an average worker's pay. She also wants utilities, when they seek rate hikes, to present a "budget-constrained option" that keeps their operating and capital costs below the rate of inflation.

Responding to Hochul's proposals, National Grid spokesman David Bertola said affordability "is top of mind for our customers and for us."

"Like our regulators, we scrutinize every dollar we spend, and we offer programs to work with customers to help manage their bills," Bertola said. "We look forward to continued collaboration with policymakers to ease the energy burden for New Yorkers while also making critical infrastructure investments to ensure safe, reliable and affordable power."