

SENATE, No. 4096

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

221st LEGISLATURE

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Sponsored by:

Senator CARMEN F. AMATO, JR.

District 9 (Ocean)

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District 10 (Monmouth and Ocean)

SYNOPSIS

Prohibits certain electric public utility rate increases and requires certain protections for ratepayers.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 3/17/2025)

1 AN ACT concerning electric public utility service and
2 supplementing Title 48 of the Revised Statutes.

3

4 **BE IT ENACTED** by the Senate and General Assembly of the State
5 of New Jersey:

6

7 1. For the purposes of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before
8 the Legislature as this bill):

9 “Board” means the Board of Public Utilities.

10 “Electric public utility” means a public utility, as that term is
11 defined in R.S.48:2-13, that transmits and distributes electricity to
12 end users within the State.

13 “Smart meter” means an electric metering device that employs
14 smart meter technology to measure, record, and transmit electricity
15 usage data to both a public utility and a customer for billing and
16 other purposes. “Smart meter” shall include a basic hourly interval
17 meter, a meter with one-way communication, and a real-time meter
18 with built-in, two-way communication capable of recording and
19 transmitting instantaneous electricity usage data.

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21 2. Notwithstanding any law, rule, or regulation to the contrary,
22 an electric public utility shall not increase the rate charged to
23 ratepayers after the effective date of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending
24 before the Legislature as this bill) for the purpose of recovering the
25 cost of installing smart meters.

26

27 3. a. On the date 30 days prior to, and until 30 days after, the
28 effective date of any electric public utility rate increase, an electric
29 public utility shall publish the following information on its Internet
30 website and in any customer communication, including, but not
31 limited to, a paper or electronic bill:

32 (1) the amount and effective date of the rate increase;

33 (2) the reasons for the rate increase;

34 (3) an explanation of any anticipated impact on ratepayer bills,
35 including, but not limited to, a clear statement of the percentage by
36 which ratepayer bills are expected to increase; and

37 (4) information on how ratepayers can provide feedback on the
38 impact of or file a complaint concerning the rate increase.

39 b. If the board finds that an electric public utility violated
40 subsection a. of this section, the board may impose a fine of up to
41 \$10,000 against the electric public utility.

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43 4. An electric public utility shall:

44 a. report to the federal Department of Energy any rate increase
45 expected to result in an average increase of five percent or greater
46 of ratepayer bills, no less than 60 days prior to the effective date of
47 the rate increase. Within its report to the Department of Energy,

1 pursuant to this subsection, an electric public utility shall include
2 the following information:

- 3 (1) the amount and effective date of the rate increase;
- 4 (2) the reasons for the rate increase;
- 5 (3) an explanation of any anticipated impact on ratepayer bills,
6 including, but not limited to, a clear statement of the percentage by
7 which ratepayer bills are expected to increase; and
- 8 (4) any measures the electric public utility may take to mitigate
9 the rate increase's impact on ratepayer bills; and

10 b. provide to the federal Department of Energy an annual
11 report on:

- 12 (1) any trends in the duration, location, and cause of an electric
13 public utility's electric service interruptions, including, but not
14 limited to, a summary of electric service interruptions during the
15 preceding calendar year; and

- 16 (2) any trends in overdue bills from an electric public utility's
17 ratepayers during the preceding calendar year.

18

19 5. Within six months following any rate increase resulting in an
20 average increase of five percent or greater of ratepayer bills, an
21 electric public utility shall not disconnect electric service to or
22 assess a late fee for bill nonpayment to any ratepayer affected by
23 that rate increase.

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25 6. This act shall take effect immediately.

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STATEMENT

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30 This bill prohibits any electric public utility from increasing the
31 rate charged to ratepayers after the bill's enactment for the purpose
32 of recovering the cost of installing smart meters.

33 Beginning on the date 30 days prior to, and until 30 days after,
34 the effective date of any electric public utility rate increase, the bill
35 requires an electric public utility to publish the following
36 information on its Internet website and in any customer
37 communication, including, but not limited to, a paper or electronic
38 bill: (1) the amount and effective date of the rate increase; (2) the
39 reasons for the rate increase; (3) an explanation of any anticipated
40 impact on ratepayer bills, including, but not limited to, a clear
41 statement of the percentage by which ratepayer bills are expected to
42 increase; and (4) information on how ratepayers can provide
43 feedback on the impact of or file a complaint concerning the rate
44 increase. The Board of Public Utilities (board) is authorized to
45 impose a fine of up to \$10,000 if the board finds that an electric
46 public utility violated this requirement.

47 An electric public utility is required to report to the federal
48 Department of Energy any rate increase expected to result in an

1 average increase of five percent or greater of ratepayer bills, no less
2 than 60 days prior to the effective date of the rate increase. Within
3 its report to the Department of Energy, an electric public utility is
4 required to include the following information: (1) the amount and
5 effective date of the rate increase; (2) the reasons for the rate
6 increase; (3) an explanation of any anticipated impact on ratepayer
7 bills, including, but not limited to, a clear statement of the
8 percentage by which ratepayer bills are expected to increase; and
9 (4) any measures the electric public utility may take to mitigate the
10 rate increase's impact on ratepayer bills.

11 An electric public utility is also required to provide to the federal
12 Department of Energy an annual report on: (1) any trends in the
13 duration, location, and cause of an electric public utility's electric
14 service interruptions, including, but not limited to, a summary of
15 electric service interruptions during the preceding calendar year;
16 and (2) any trends in overdue bills from an electric public utility's
17 ratepayers during the preceding calendar year.

18 The bill prohibits an electric public utility from disconnecting
19 electric service to or assessing a late fee for bill nonpayment to any
20 ratepayer affected by a rate increase resulting in an average increase
21 of five percent or greater of ratepayer bills within six months
22 following that rate increase.