



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrea Stewart-Cousins

## State Senate Advances Sweeping Utility Reforms to Protect New York Ratepayers

ANDREA STEWART-COUSINS June 6, 2025

| ISSUE: **PROTECTING UTILITY RATEPAYERS**



(Albany, NY) - In a landmark move to aid countless New Yorkers overwhelmed by soaring utility costs and alleged unfair treatment by energy providers, the State Senate Thursday adopted a sweeping package of eight bills aimed at overhauling the Public Service Commission (PSC) to ensure fairness, transparency, and accountability for utility customers across New York State.

**Said Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins:** “This isn’t just about numbers on a bill—it’s about families in Yonkers struggling to pay for heat in winter, seniors in Dobbs Ferry scared to run their air

conditioners in summer, or small businesses in Mount Pleasant forced to choose between survival and utility costs. I've received calls from far too many constituents struggling with their utility bills and being left in the dark during outages. Meanwhile, utility companies keep cashing record profits. This package flips the script—putting people over profits. Utilities are a lifeline, not a luxury. For too long, New Yorkers have been treated as cash cows by companies that answer to shareholders, not the people. Today, we're fighting back.”

The legislation addresses systemic failures at the PSC, which has repeatedly approved rate hikes while failing to hold utilities accountable for poor service. The eight bills would:

**Require Early Warnings for Rate Hikes:** Families will receive alerts via text, email, and their monthly bills if utilities propose raising rates, giving them time to voice concerns.

**Restore Consumer Representation:** A consumer advocate will join the State Energy Planning Board to ensure everyday New Yorkers have a voice in energy decisions.

**Punish Utilities for Pain and Suffering:** The PSC will now consider non-economic damages—like stress from power outages—when fining utilities for misconduct.

**Reform PSC Leadership:** Expand the PSC to eight members, add an experienced consumer advocate to the PSC's board, bar former utility employees from joining the commission for two years, and mandate the agency prioritize affordable, reliable service.

**Stop Retroactive Rate Gouging:** Extend the timeline for reviewing rate hikes to 14 months, giving advocates and the PSC more time to challenge unfair requests.

**Return Excess Profits to Ratepayers:** Utilities can't pocket extra money if they exceed profit limits—those funds will go back to customers.

**Create 24/7 Outage Hotlines:** Utilities must provide a toll-free number for residents to report power failures instantly.

**Alert Families to Soaring Energy Bills:** Launch a program to notify customers when their energy use—and costs—exceed a threshold they set.

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