



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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OP-ED FROM SENATOR MAZIARZ: What can you do to lower utility bill? Consider an ESCO.

GEORGE D. MAZIARZ April 8, 2014

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While this bitter winter is hopefully behind us, there is no doubt that one of its most harmful effects still lingers—high energy bills.

I have heard from many constituents who have seen major spikes in their utility bills in recent weeks. People are understandably upset, and they want to know what they can do about it.

One thing you can do lower your energy bill is consider buying your supply of energy from a different company. It may surprise you to learn that the utility is not the only game in town.

Since the deregulation of New York's energy industry in the late 1990s, local residents have had the option of purchasing their natural gas or electricity supply from their utility company or from ESCOs (energy service companies). The addition of ESCOs has made the energy market competitive, and you can do your research to look for better deals and lower prices.

What is an ESCO? An ESCO is a company you can purchase your energy from, other than your main utility distributor, that may offer lower supply costs. Most energy bills are divided into two parts—supply and delivery. So while you may pay delivery costs to a

company like National Grid, you are not required to purchase your supply of energy from them.

You can compare prices and services offered by various ESCOs by visiting www.newyorkpowertochoose.com. The website is simple to use; just enter your zip code to see the many offers available in your area.

The ability to choose an ESCO helps empower consumers to make smart decisions about their energy purchases. While some companies' rates fluctuate heavily with the demands of the market and other factors, ESCO customers are often able to get fixed rate contracts so they know what to expect when they receive their monthly bill.

Shopping around for an ESCO and taking steps to conserve energy usage is something consumers can do to take control of their own costs. At the state level, one thing I have done as Chairman of the Senate Energy and Telecommunications Committee is urge the Public Service Commission to request an investigation of the recent trend in high pricing from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. As a result this request has been made and I am hopeful the investigation will begin soon.

Also, in our recently-enacted state budget I lead a successful effort to reduce the 18-A energy surcharge that affects residential and business customers. As a result of this achievement that tax will be cut by 50% by next year.

Still, there is more work to do. That is why I am sponsoring legislation in the Senate that would cap the taxes and fees imposed by the Public Service Commission on your utility bill. These extra costs have been added without legislative approval, and it's time to rein them in and pass my "energy tax cap" bill (S.5484-A).

Working together, the power to better control energy costs is in our hands.

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