



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Pete Harckham

Harckham Calls for Expanded Customer Rights and Notice Requirements from Utility Providers

PETE HARCKHAM February 9, 2022

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Albany, NY – In response to numerous complaints from his constituents, New York State Senator Pete Harckham called today for expanded customer rights and notice requirements by utility providers to warn of major price increases or energy costs. Recently, homeowners and small businesses have been reeling after their bills from Consolidated Edison (aka Con Edison or ConEd) and New York State Electric and Gas Corporation (NYSEG) more than doubled, in some cases, because of a major increase of natural gas costs.

“It is simply wrong for a utility company to issue bills that include considerable increases for customer service without an advance warning or satisfactory explanation of what’s going on,” said Harckham. “Where’s the transparency? These massive bills are distressing customers to no end. With all of the ways in which a utility can communicate to its customers, there is no excuse to stun and agitate people with these kinds of increases.”

Right now, utility providers, which basically distribute energy to customers, have a notice requirement for an increase of those delivery costs, Harckham pointed out, but the supply costs don’t have the same customer requirements. And while utility providers share information with customers regarding how a fixed rate is attainable from an energy supply company (ESCO) other than a provider such as ConEd or NYSEG, it is not often entirely or easily understood by many people.

“It’s time to make the information on the energy bill for New York residents crystal clear, and the best options that are available for people, say, on fixed incomes, made wholly understandable to all,” Harckham added. “This has to be an elemental requirement that is part of customer rights when it comes to utility providers.”

Currently, the state’s [Home Energy Fair Practices Act](#), which incorporates amendments from the Energy Consumer Protection Act of 2002, does not contain any requirements for customers regarding advance notifications or explanations about variable energy supply costs and how they can increase sharply.

In the New York metro area, there are approximately 3.5 million electric customers and 1.1 million natural gas customers with Con Edison. For NYSEG, with a customer base spread more into upstate New York, there are approximately 900,000 electric customers and 270,000 natural gas customers.

Harckham’s office has received over 75 complaints from residents about their Con Edison and NYSEG bills in the past three days.

“The residents I represent are very concerned about the skyrocketing charges from NYSEG,” said Gorge Rolita, president of the Heritage Hills Condo 20 Board of Managers and vice president of the Heritage Hills Council of Condominiums. “The charges came as a total surprise and shock to them, without explanation, advance notice or advice on payment plans to ease the burden. That shows, at the very least, a lack of regard for NYSEG customers and total insensitivity to their financial situations. I thank Senator Harckham for taking the initiative in this matter.”

“I was shocked when I received my bill, which was triple what I usually pay,” said Dona Bianco, a Thornwood resident and Con Edison customer. “I am a retiree and this is a huge cost.”

“It’s outrageous that my Con Ed bill doubled this month without any notice from the utility about the reason,” said Ann Clifford of Valhalla. “I have no way of paying and I cannot reach anyone on the phone at Con Ed to discuss payment options. They should at least have people available who can help.”