



Stop Playing Politics with Our Electric Bills

By Anne Weisberg,
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Like you, part of my electric bill – the “Public Benefits” portion – just went up. The Republican caucus, including my opponent Pat Callahan, has been quick to blame the hike on everything from EVs to poor people. In my view, sowing division is not a way to solve problems. I think we need our leaders to be honest with us about how we got here and to be principled, rather than political, in charting the course forward.

How we got here begins with a bipartisan agreement in 2017 to keep the Millstone nuclear power plant in operation at a guaranteed rate for 10 years. The plant provides close to 40% of our power across the state and over 1000 good paying jobs. And it saved customers \$200 million dollars in 2022, when methane gas prices spiked.

But today, the Millstone plant agreement is costing customers – over \$600 million to be exact. That’s represents over 70% of the \$800 million rate increase that Eversource received this spring in a vote by PURA (the Public Utility Regulatory Authority), which also allowed Eversource to compress the pay-back period to 10 months, rather than the 36 months that PURA’s chair argued was reasonable.

Most of the remaining \$124 million is to pay back Eversource for suspending electricity cut offs during Covid. Given the incredible disruption caused by Covid, there was bipartisan support for the suspension. Now, Republicans, including Callahan, say it should have come out of the general budget or ARPA funds, but that in effect is asking the ratepayer to pay a tax rather than an increase in rate. In other words, consumers will pay one way or the other.

Then last week, PURA approved another increase

– less than the cost of a latte from Starbucks for most consumers - to cover the costs of installing electric vehicle charging stations. To be clear, there is no corresponding mandate to buy EVs, despite what Callahan implies in his recent column in this paper.

And yes, a very small part of the original increase was due to Eversource’s request for reimbursement for rebates it gave for EV chargers. In fact, as Callahan states in his column, the EV rebate request from Eversource was for \$7million - less than 1% of the \$800 million that resulted in our electric rates spiking!

So, where do we go from here? I agree with Connecticut’s Consumer Counsel Claire Coleman, whose office represents the interest of utility ratepayers, that PURA needs to either reopen the original proceeding that led to these rate hikes or open a new proceeding to consider a rate adjustment framework mechanism that will avoid future instances of rate shock. As she said in a News Times article, “Rather than looking out solely for their bottom line, our utility companies should come to the table with a willingness to do what’s in the best interests of their customers.”

If I am elected, I promise you I will give you the truth about what is going on and the tradeoffs involved in decisions. I will work with PURA to hold our utilities accountable to consumers. And I will balance the long term need to transition to a clean energy future with the short term need to stabilize and even lower our energy costs. You deserve nothing less from your elected leaders.

As always, write me at anne4staterrep@gmail.com with your comments or go to my website, anneforstaterrep.com.



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