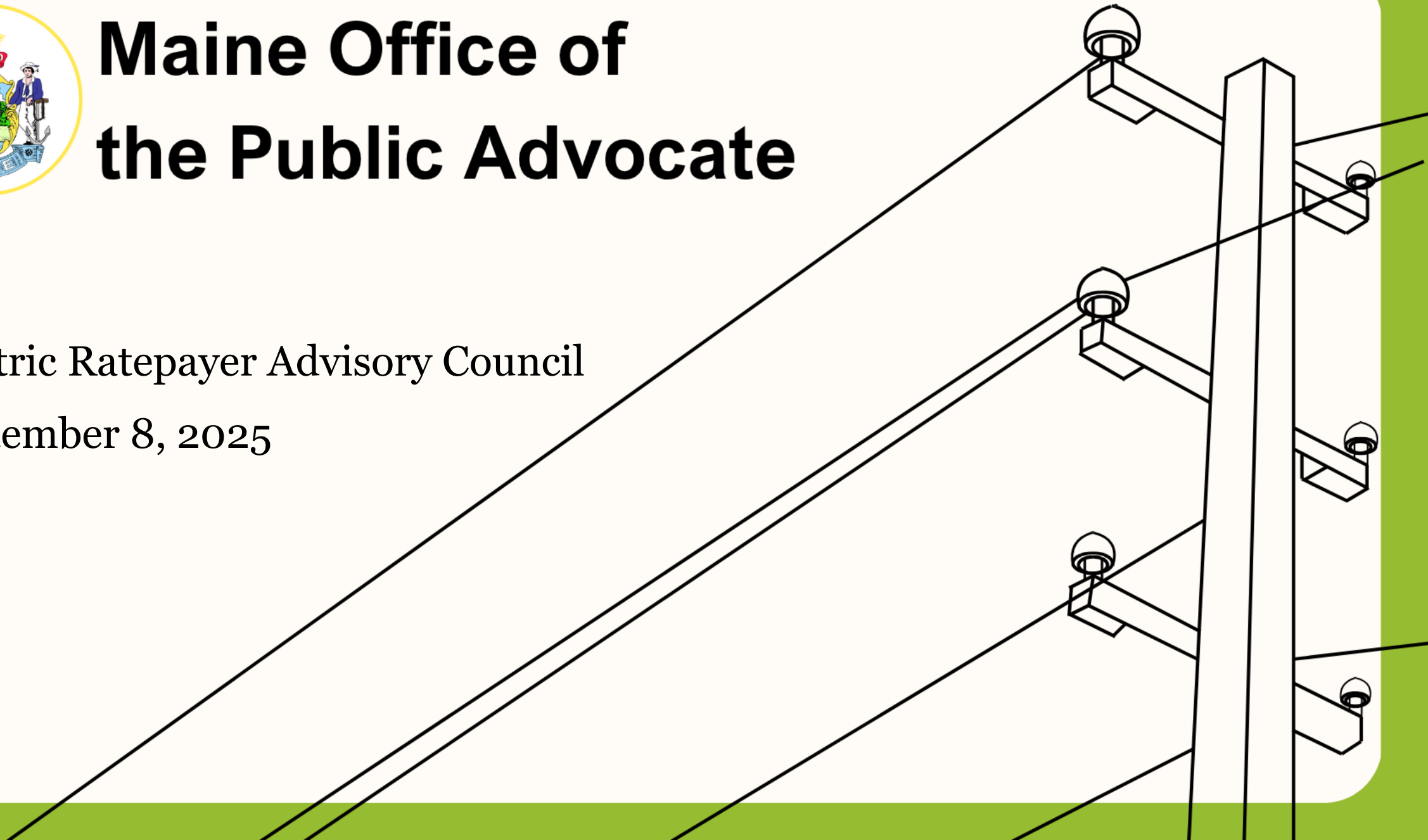




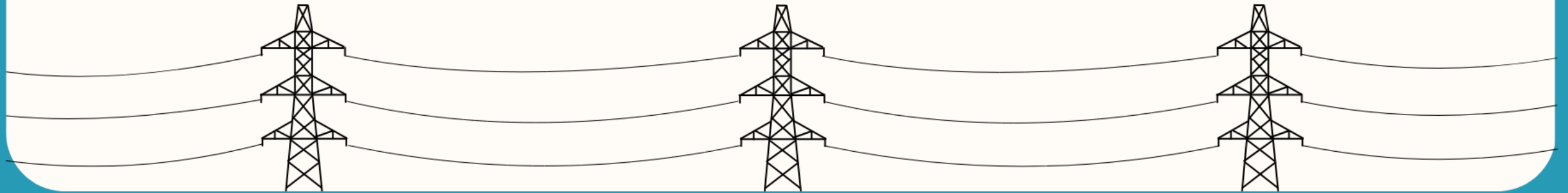
Maine Office of the Public Advocate

Electric Ratepayer Advisory Council

September 8, 2025



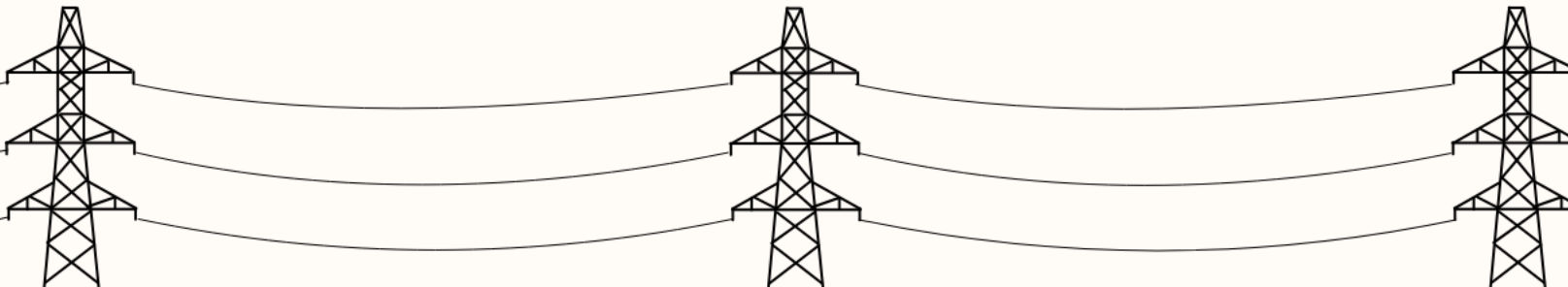
Introductions



Statutory Charge

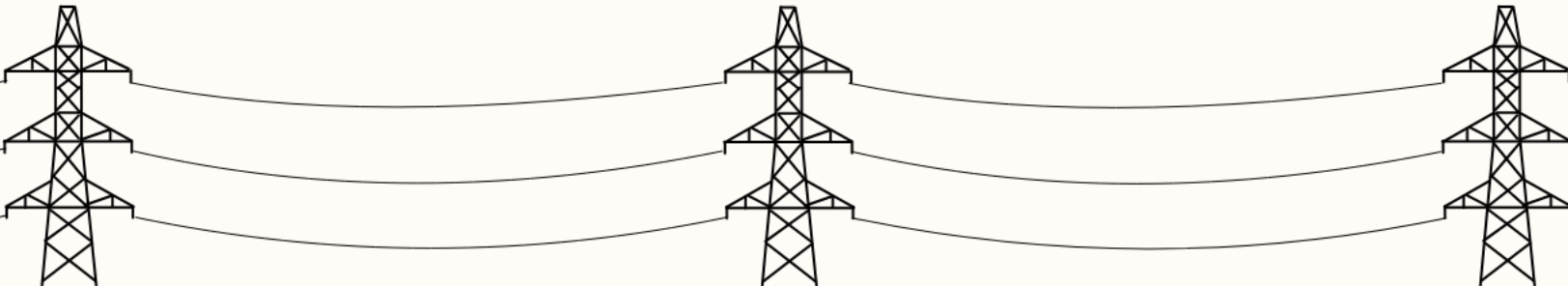
The council shall **make recommendations to the Public Advocate** regarding methods to ensure that ratepayers are able to afford electricity in the State. In developing recommendations, the council shall:

- A. **Review the electric rates and rate design** in effect when the council is developing its recommendations, projected changes in those rates and the policy goals and other factors contributing to projected changes in those rates;
- B. **Review electric assistance programs** in existence when the council is developing its recommendations, including those programs implemented pursuant to section 3214, and **consider more streamlined and cost-effective options to provide assistance to all ratepayers that may be struggling to pay their electric utility bills**, including an electric utility relief program that provides assistance to individuals receiving benefits under a state or federal low-income assistance program or whose family income is equal to or below 200% of the federal nonfarm income official poverty line;
- C. Identify methods to: (1) **Fund electric assistance programs** that do not result in shifting costs to ratepayers; (2) **Improve education and outreach efforts** regarding electric assistance programs, the retail electricity supply market and energy efficiency programs; and (3) **Make energy efficiency programs more accessible** to low-income, moderate income and small business ratepayers, including those ratepayers that rent housing accommodations or commercial spaces;
- D. Identify **any other methods that may improve the affordability of electricity**.



Council Expectations

- Review materials prior to meetings
- Participate in discussions and requests for feedback
- Attend meetings in-person or on-line



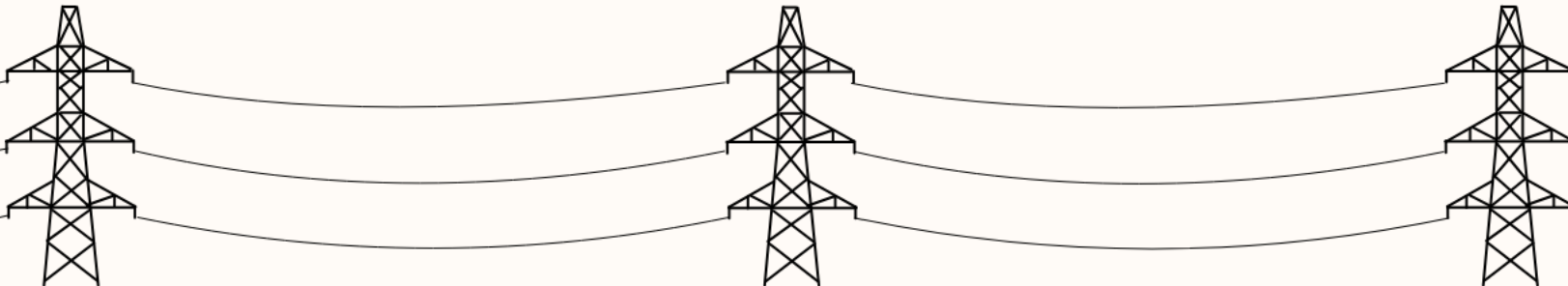
Proposed Meeting Schedule

Date (all meetings Mondays @ 2pm)	Location Plan
10/20/25	Teams only
11/17/25	In person with Teams option
12/8/25	Teams only
1/26/26	In person with Teams option
3/9/26	In person with Teams option
4/13/26	Teams only
5/11/26	In person with Teams option
6/8/26	Teams only



Ongoing Progress on ERAC Projects

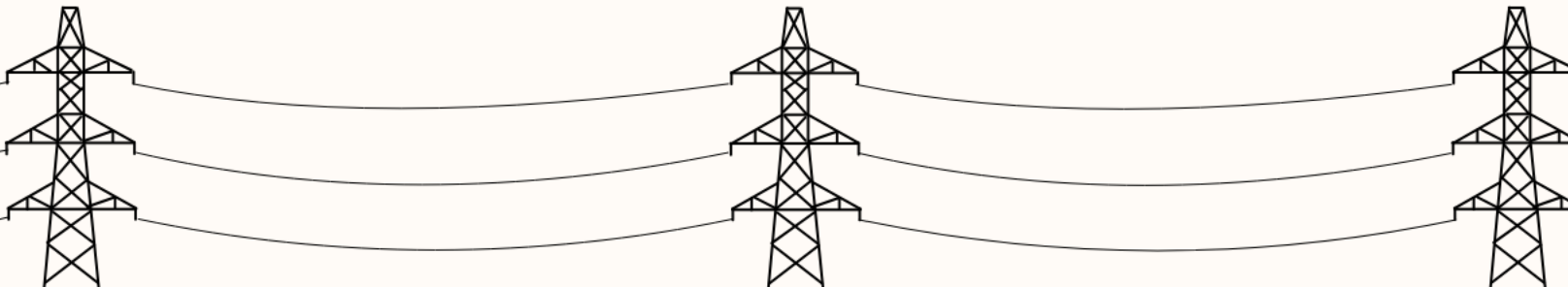
- Retail Electricity Supply Study
 - Both CMP and Versant submitted data in late August
 - Tim Howington has begun study
 - Anticipate first draft of findings at October meeting
- LIAP funding for 2025-26
 - Rulemaking (PUC Docket No. 2025-00241)
 - Update on DHHS data sharing process



2024 ERAC Recommendations

Further Investigate the Retail Electricity Supply Market

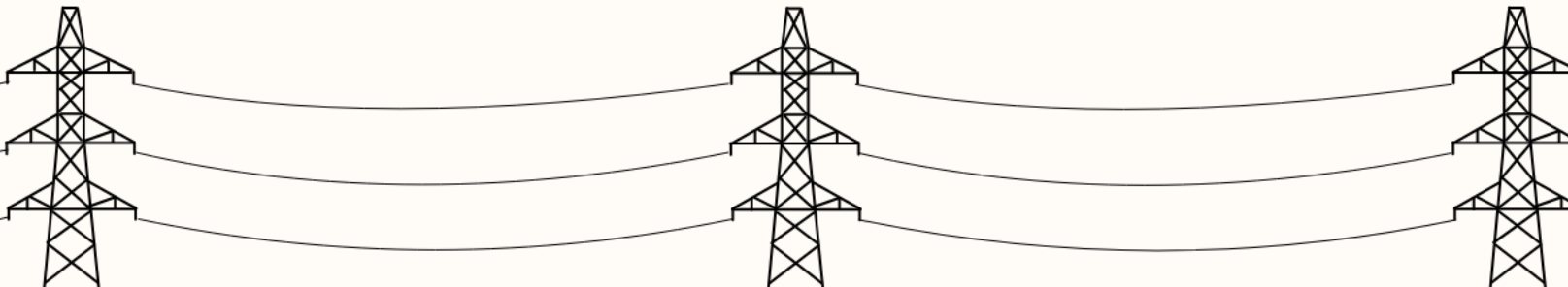
1. Support legislation to allow the OPA, subject to Public Utilities Commission (PUC) approval, access to CEP data held by utilities to fully investigate the extent to which low-income households are being overcharged by CEPs. **Completed.**
2. Use the data referenced above to enable ERAC to expand its investigation of the ongoing CEP residential overcharging (\$135M over eight years) to more precisely calculate how much of it is paid by low-income consumers. **In progress.**



2024 ERAC Recommendations

Expand Low-Income Assistance Program (LIAP)

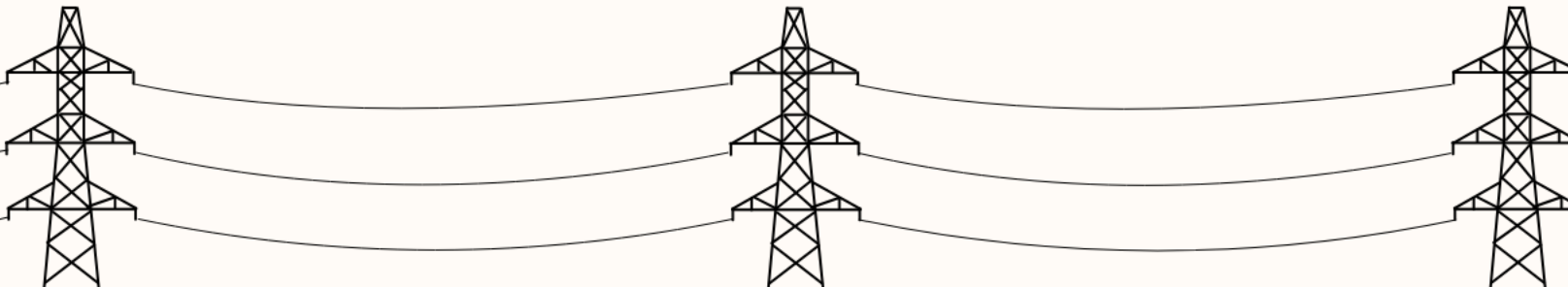
3. Increase LIAP funding from ratepayers and/or taxpayers to help close the affordability gap so that, on average, consumers are not spending more than 4% of household income on electricity.
See LIAP Rulemaking.
4. Increase taxpayer funding by dedicating the existing state sales tax on electricity to LIAP funding. **Bill on Appropriations Table, not tied to sales tax.**



2024 ERAC Recommendations

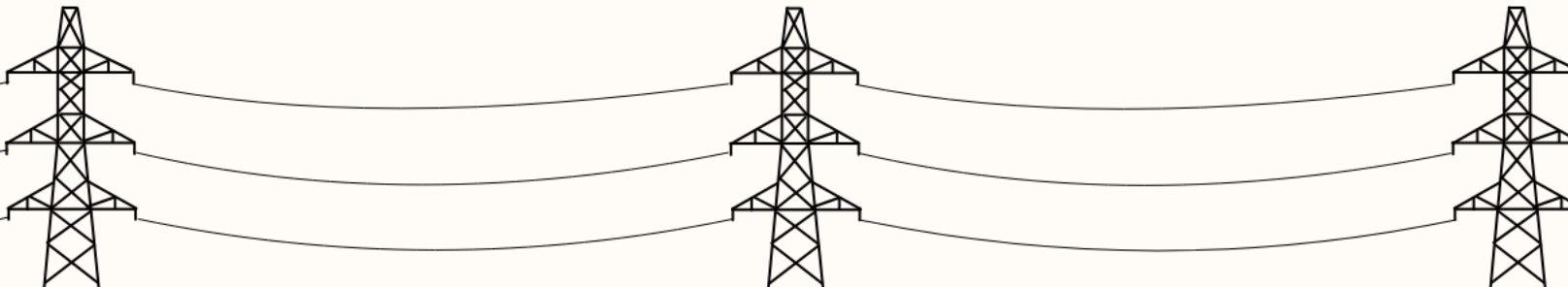
Improve Administration of LIAP

5. Make LIAP enrollment automatic for Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) clients with household incomes that qualify for LIAP with an opt-out provision. **In progress.**
6. Until automatic enrollment is implemented, continue the current DHHS- expedited LIAP enrollment program which provides an enrollment letter to qualifying households. **Sending 9/30/2025.**
7. Convert LIAP benefits to a uniform monthly percentage discount applied to current bills, rather than two lump sum bill credits per year. Set these LIAP discount percentages for each of the four Federal Poverty Level (FPL) tiers to achieve an average 4% affordability target in each tier, thereby providing higher benefits for lower income ratepayers. **See LIAP Rulemaking.**
8. Implement an annual true-up, or rate adjustment, with each utility to ensure that they are fully reimbursed for all LIAP benefits and program costs, to be sure that each LIAP participant receives the maximum calculated benefit, regardless of initial budget estimates. **See LIAP Rulemaking.**



2024 ERAC Recommendations (#9 & 10)

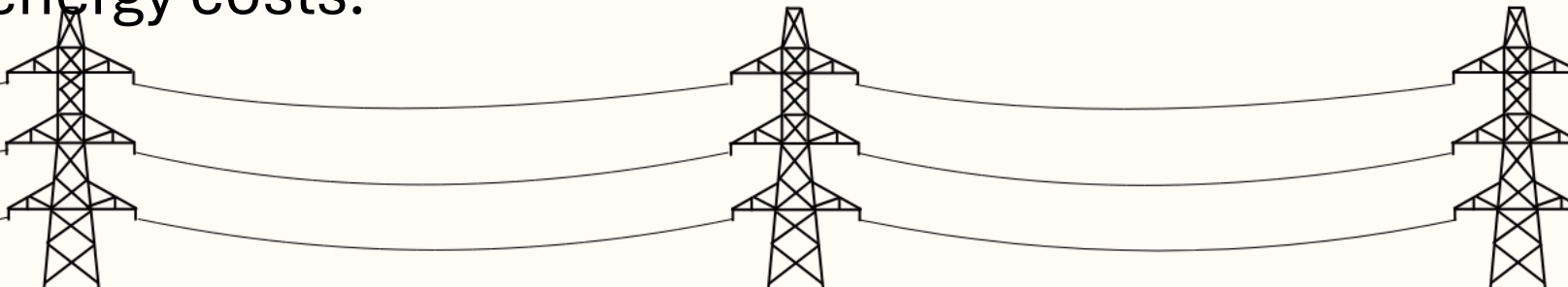
- Until LIAP is converted to a uniform discount program, reconsider the LIAP benefit amounts when the standard offer rate changes on January 1 during each program year.
- Until LIAP is converted to a uniform discount program, consider changes to the current program to minimize the likelihood that the current LIAP bill credits are so large they cannot be used by individual ratepayers in the year in which they were awarded.



2024 ERAC Recommendations

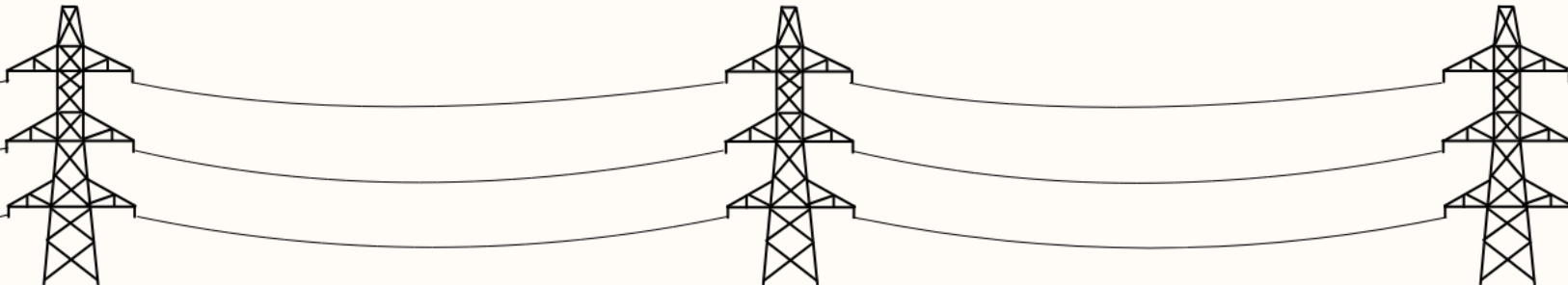
Increase consumer education and outreach

11. Ensure all LIAP and Arrearage Management Program (AMP) participants have a clear understanding of the energy efficiency programs available to them.
12. Increase understanding and education regarding common reasons for high electric bills.
13. Encourage LIAP participants with arrearages to participate in AMP.
14. Increase consumer awareness of safety issues and potentially significant financial burden of using space heaters for winter heating.
15. Promote EMT as a source of information and programs for managing high energy costs.



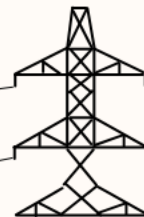
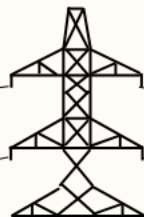
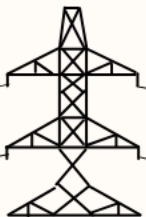
2024 ERAC Recommendations

16. Make reasonable accommodation in the implementation of these recommendations for the consumer-owned utilities (COUs) that have limited resources and for investor-owned utilities (IOUs) whose billing systems may take time to implement. **See LIAP Rulemaking.**
17. Support new programs such as Solar for All (SFA) and continued heat pump deployment that provide substantial savings opportunities for all lower income ratepayers.
18. Fund housing programs that improve building conditions, to enable low-income homes to afford structural repairs needed to qualify for government funding of weatherization upgrades.
19. Consider the rising need and cost of summer air conditioning when considering low-income ratepayer benefits.
20. Consider the impact on low-income ratepayers of large arrearages built up during the winter disconnection moratorium.



What Issues Should ERAC Tackle in the Next Three Years?

- Reflect
- Record
- Share



Conclusion

- Council Openings
- Next meeting – October 20 @2pm via Teams
- Public Comment

