Maine Office of the Public Advocate

Annual Report

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MAINE
Office of the
Public Advocate

Office of the Public Advocate
Your Advocate for Affordable Utility Service

Heather Sanborn
Public Advocate

September 1, 2026

Dear Governor Mills, Chairs Lawrence and Sachs, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology,

As required by 35-A M.R.S. §1702(6), the Office of the Public Advocate (OPA) submits this Annual Report providing an overview of our Office's work in the prior fiscal year. Our work includes participation in regulatory proceedings, advocacy before legislative committees, consumer advocacy and outreach, convening the Electric Ratepayers Advisory Council (ERAC), and facilitating the Nonwires Alternative (NWA) program.

Affordability has always been the lens through which our office approaches its work. This year, the mandate to consider affordability explicitly became part of the Public Utility Commission's statutory charge as well. Governor Mills signed LD 1949, titled "An Act Regarding Energy Fairness," on March 23. This law directs the Public Utilities Commission to weigh affordability during its decision-making process.

Affordability concerns were at the heart of OPA's work this year, which resulted in the PUC's unanimous dismissal of Central Maine Power's proposed five-year rate plan. As proposed, this plan would have raised electricity rates by an average of $35 a month. The Commission agreed with many of the concerns our office raised about the plan's lack of incentives for CMP to manage costs. Following the dismissal, CMP came back with a revised filing that reduced the scope of the rate increases it is seeking. Our team and our outside experts are digging in on this new proposal and expect the case to occupy much of our time over the coming months.

After years of advocacy by the OPA, Maine's Low-Income Assistance Program is getting real improvements. Starting this fall, most eligible households will be enrolled automatically. Funding is expanding to more than $40 million annually, including $7.5 million from the State's general budget rather than from electric customers, which will help the program to be more sustainable in the long run. And assistance for customers of our largest utilities will come as a monthly discount on the electric bill, not an unpredictable twice-a-year credit that families struggle to budget for.

Our work at the federal level is also paying off. After years of advocacy by our office and other consumer advocates, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission ordered a reduction in the return on equity paid to New England transmission owners and required substantial refunds to customers. We're also pushing for more scrutiny of costly transmission investments and more transparency in regional planning. This work won't show results overnight, but we think will pay dividends in controlling transmission costs down the road.

The work of the OPA is always a team effort, and I am deeply grateful to work with an excellent staff of utility regulatory attorneys, a financial analyst, a consumer advisor, a legislative liaison, an office administrator, and a legal assistant. This year our team made filings in over 142 different dockets at the Maine Public Utilities Commission, as well as participating in regulatory processes at ISO New England and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. We offered testimony on more than a dozen bills before the Legislature and secured additional funding for income-qualified assistance programs at this critical moment when budgets are squeezed across the board. We directly assisted nearly 2600 customers who reached out to us for help. We have done all of this without increasing the amount of the utility assessment that funds our operations.

Whether it's rising demand or shifting federal policy, the utility issues that Maine consumers face are in flux. The OPA's mission is not in flux. We remain steadfastly committed to giving Maine consumers a strong, independent voice wherever decisions get made about their utility bills.

We appreciate the Legislature's continued support and look forward to the work ahead.

We welcome feedback and questions from Maine consumers and their representatives. Our office at 103 Water Street in Hallowell is open during normal business hours. We can be reached by phone at (207)624-3687 and by email at opa@maine.gov.

Sincerely,

Heather Sanborn
Public Advocate

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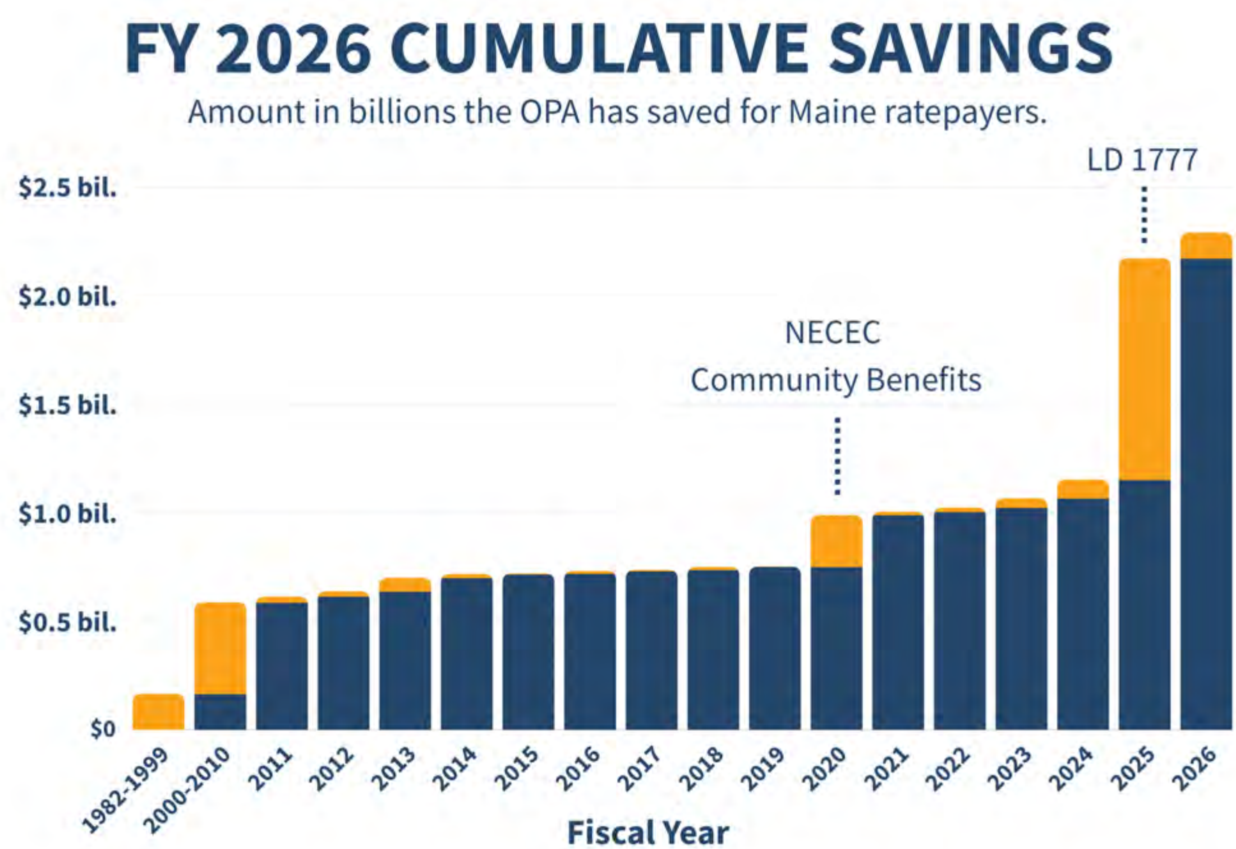


Maine Office of the Public Advocate

2025-2026

OPA by the Numbers

PUC Dockets Participated In

142

Legislative Testimony Submitted

15

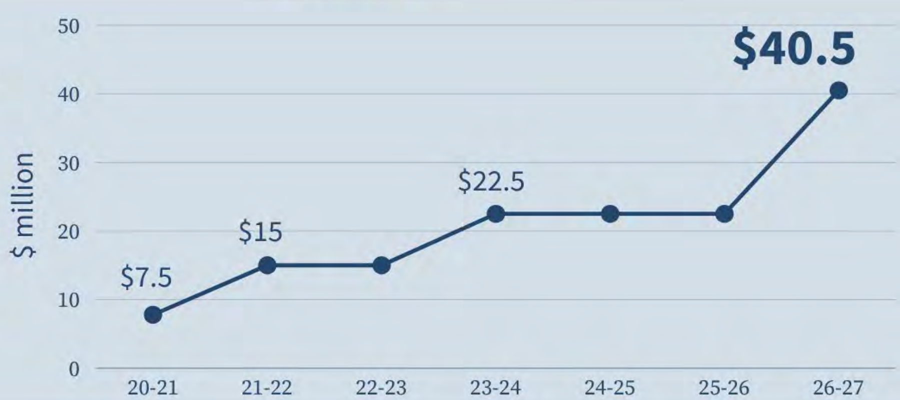
FY 2026 Ratepayer Savings

$118,733,900

OPA Savings Since 1981

$2.3B+

Low-Income Assistance Program (LIAP) Funding 2020-2026



Consumer Outreach Events Attended

30

Customers Directly Assisted

2,584

Electric

Commission Agrees with OPA that the Methodology for Calculating Service Quality Benchmarks Should Remain Unchanged

In a 2023 Order (Docket No. 2022-00279), the PUC established service standards for CMP and Versant that are measured according to three reliability metrics:

- System Average Interruption Frequency Index (SAIFI);
- Customer Average Interruption Duration Index (CAIDI); and
- System Average Interruption Duration Index (SAIDI).

The individual benchmarks for each of these metrics that must be met by the utilities are based on the historic performance of each utility. In Docket No. 2025-00270, CMP asked to change the way it calculates the CAIDI and SAIDI benchmarks and to exclude customer-caused outages from the data on which they are derived. The PUC agreed with the OPA that the benchmarks should continue to be set according to the 2023 Order.

$40.5 Million in Bill Discounts Will Be Provided to Low-Income Electric Customers Using the New Automatic Enrollment Process Beginning October 1

After years of advocacy by the OPA, automatic enrollment of customers qualifying for the Low-Income Assistance Program (LIAP) and additional funding for the LIAP program will start October 1. The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)'s new SupportLink program identifies electric customers who participate in DHHS means-tested programs and qualify for LIAP so that they will also begin to receive the benefit without a separate application (Docket No. 2026-00046). The 2026–27 funding consists of $31.75 million from ratepayers, $1.25 million from the New England Clean Energy Connect (NECEC) Low-Income Customer Benefits Fund, and $7.5 million from the General Fund resulting from newly enacted legislation. Further, Versant and CMP customers will now receive the LIAP benefit as a discount on their monthly total bill rather than lump sum bill credits once or twice a year. Transforming the program into a monthly discount will better match with the way family budgets actually work, providing more predictable and helpful assistance.

Versant and CMP customers will now receive the LIAP benefit as a discount on their monthly total bill rather than lump sum bill credits once or twice a year.

OPA Successfully Opposes Special Rate Contract Between CMP and Texas Instruments

After opposition by the OPA, the Commission denied CMP's request for approval of a proposed special rate contract with Texas Instruments in April 2026 (Docket No. 2025-00013).

The proposed special rate contract would have continued special pricing offered to Texas Instruments and its predecessor, National Semiconductor, specifically to exempt them from stranded cost obligations related to the service requirements for the 8-inch wafer facility located in South Portland.

This special pricing began with a rate contract for National Semiconductor in 1996 and was later updated through new or revised contracts in 1997, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2008, 2013, 2015, and 2019. The last approved contract between CMP and Texas Instruments expired in December 2024.

> The OPA opposed the special rate contract because CMP and Texas Instruments failed to demonstrate that it was necessary.

Special rate contracts are allowed under § 703 of Title 35-A, subject to approval by the PUC. Because special rate contracts require that lost revenues be made up by all other utility customers, the PUC has adopted a strict test to ensure that any special rate is necessary and that it maximizes revenues from the customer. The OPA opposed this special rate contract because CMP and Texas Instruments failed to demonstrate that it was necessary. Texas Instruments instead maintained throughout the case that the strict test the PUC usually applies should not be applied in this case.

In its Order rejecting approval of the contract, the PUC agreed with the OPA, finding that CMP and Texas Instruments have not provided substantial evidence to support why the special rate contract is necessary.

OPA Reduces CMP Storm Costs After Successfully Challenging Invoices

During CMP's annual compliance filing proceeding, the OPA identified many storm invoices that were unsupported by adequate time sheets, making it impossible to tell what the charges were for and whether they were reasonable (Docket No. 2025-00018). CMP and the OPA reached a settlement agreement that, among other things, excluded the costs of some of these invoices from recovery. The settlement also identified nine specific invoices for which CMP would be allowed 45 days to produce time sheets signed by a contractor. The stipulation was that 50% of the invoice value would be excluded from CMP's next annual compliance filing if adequate time sheets were not provided.

On August 19, 2025, CMP filed what it claimed was adequate support for the invoices, even though CMP admitted that the time sheets were not signed by a contractor. CMP also argued that only 25% of the value of the invoices should be excluded from recovery based on the theory that only 50% of Tier 1 storm costs are reconcilable.

The OPA opposed CMP's request to allow recovery of all but one of the nine invoices and asked that the PUC disallow 50% of the value of the defective invoices.

On September 24, 2025, the PUC issued an Order agreeing with the OPA in full and ordering CMP to refund customers $139,733, plus carrying costs, in its next annual compliance filing. These savings were incorporated in the Company's 2026 annual compliance filing, for a total ratepayer savings of approximately $160,000, including carrying costs.

On September 24, 2025, the PUC issued an Order agreeing with the OPA in full and ordering CMP to refund customers $139,733, plus carrying costs, in its next annual compliance filing.

CMP Agrees to Withdraw Request for Recovery of Lewiston Energy Credit Costs in Response to OPA Opposition

As part of CMP's stranded cost reconciliation filing, the Company proposed to recover the costs of a pre-restructuring contract with the City of Lewiston that allowed CMP's affiliate to develop a hydroelectric generator in exchange for providing bill credits to the city (Docket No. 2025-00019).

The OPA opposed recovery and ultimately entered into a settlement agreement with CMP that temporarily allowed the company to recover the contract costs subject to refund after a PUC decision on the issue following briefing by the parties.

On September 24, 2025, CMP filed a brief in which it stated that it would not pursue recovery of the Lewiston contract costs and agreed to refund customers for the costs of the contract.

The PUC issued an order requiring CMP to refund customers in its next stranded cost reconciliation filing. The total amount of the refund should be approximately $494,000 plus carrying costs.

Commission Grants the OPA's Motion to Dismiss CMP's Proposed Multi-Year Rate Plan

On November 18, 2025, the PUC voted unanimously to dismiss CMP's proposed 5-year rate plan, a filing that would have significantly increased electric distribution costs for Maine households beginning in October 2026 (Docket No. 2025-00218).

Commissioners concurred with the OPA that the plan did not incentivize utility efficiency or cost management, and that it shifted an unacceptable amount of risk to ratepayers.

Among the reasons to dismiss the case, Commissioners concurred with the OPA that the plan did not incentivize utility efficiency or cost management, and that it shifted an unacceptable amount of risk to ratepayers. Commissioners also found fault with the sequence of this plan proceeding before CMP's Integrated Grid Plan (IGP) was submitted.

As a result of the Commission's decision, CMP withdrew its multiyear rate plan and filed a new distribution rate case in April 2026. The revised request, in its initial phase, proposes only a single year of rate increases.

The ratepayer savings from the dismissal are difficult to quantify because they largely relate to the rejection of poorly aligned incentives and a risk shift to ratepayers that could have cost a significant amount of money over five years. Nonetheless, the ratepayer's savings attributable to the delay in the effective date of new rates from October 2026 to May 2027 amounts to approximately $107,300,000.

Commission Issues Guidance for Multi-Year Rate Plans that Includes Recommendations from the OPA

After Central Maine Power withdrew its initial multiyear rate plan (MYRP) (Docket No. 2025-00218), the Public Utilities Commission opened a docket to provide guidance to CMP and other utilities as to what elements should be included in a successful MYRP (Docket No. 2025-00354).

In its comments, the OPA cautioned that MYRPs must be carefully structured to incentivize utilities to pursue cost-saving measures. It further warned that MYRPs incorporating significant capital funding and/or reconciliation mechanisms may produce less favorable outcomes than traditional cost-of-service regulation, as these features can create opportunities for utilities to optimize the frameworks to their financial advantage.

China Lake

In March, the PUC issued its guidance on MYRPs, emphasizing that, "regardless of what rate plan structure is applied, the Commission's ability to review the prudency of utility investments should remain unchanged."

A significant point of discussion was whether the existing revenue decoupling mechanism (RDM) should be preserved. The Commission agreed with many stakeholders, including the OPA, CMP, Efficiency Maine Trust, and the Department of Energy Resources, that the existing RDM should remain.

> The PUC found that "like the OPA, the Commission believes the Revenue Decoupling Mechanism ensures the utility does not undeservedly suffer from efficiency and conservation efforts or undeservedly benefit from electrification efforts.

An RDM separates the amount of money the utility collects from ratepayers from its sales volume—it "decouples" revenue from sales so that utilities will pursue electricity reduction measures without fear of losing revenues. The PUC found that "[l]ike the OPA, the Commission believes the RDM ensures the utility does not undeservedly suffer from efficiency and conservation efforts or undeservedly benefit from electrification efforts." To keep the RDM measure in place, the Commission further recommended a revenue cap framework instead of a price cap framework. In a price cap framework, prices are capped but revenue is not. Therefore, the utility can theoretically earn more by encouraging customers to use more electricity.

The Commission's guidance details several more MYRP recommendations including factors that allow utilities to request additional funding for special purposes, a means of giving savings to ratepayers for utility productivity gains, and performance incentive mechanisms.

The Commission's guidance is not binding on utilities. Its purpose is to provide information to utilities and stakeholders of one type of MYRP that the Commission finds acceptable.

OPA Challenges CMP's Proposed Distribution Rate Increase and Opposes CMP's Request for Temporary Rates

In April, CMP filed a new request for a distribution rate increase after its October 2025 filing was dismissed by the PUC (Docket No. 2026-00043). In the request, CMP seeks a revenue requirement increase of approximately $189 million. CMP's filing also includes a request for temporary rates.

> The OPA opposes CMP's request for temporary rates because it is inconsistent with the requirements of the temporary rates statute.

The OPA opposes CMP's request for temporary rates because it is inconsistent with the requirements of the temporary rates statute. In addition, the OPA has retained multiple expert consultants and will vigorously challenge the substance of CMP's filing to ensure that CMP's rates remain just and reasonable.

PUC Agrees with OPA and Rejects CMP's Request to Defer July 1, 2026 Rate Decrease

In CMP's Annual Compliance Filing Proceeding (Docket No. 2026-00011), CMP argued in a last-minute filing that a substantial rate decrease should not go into effect as scheduled on July 1 because CMP had requested that the Commission approve temporary rates in its pending distribution rate case. The decrease is a result of significant storm costs incurred in 2023 and 2024 coming out of rates. CMP sought to defer the rate decrease and use it to offset an increase associated with its request for temporary rates.

> The OPA objected to CMP's request to defer the rate decrease and the Commission agreed.

The OPA objected to CMP's request to defer the rate decrease and the Commission agreed finding that the request for temporary rates was uncertain—both in terms of whether they would be approved and the timing of when they would go into effect.

The Commission further agreed with the OPA that the storm reserve balance should be reset to zero from its current cap at negative $20 million, with recovery of the $20 million included in the July 1 rate change. As a result, customers will save more than $1 million in annual carrying costs. Eliminating the reserve carry-forward balance will also provide an additional cushion against storm costs in 2026, mitigating any rate increase triggered in next year's proceeding.

As a result of the Commission's order, and a reduction in the rate that funds Efficiency Maine Trust, a typical residential customer using 550 kWh per month will see a reduction of $11.28 per month on their bills beginning July 1.

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CMP and Waste Management Agree to Modify Special Rate Contract to Provide No Discount to Stranded Cost Rates After OPA Opposition

Waste Management, CMP, and Madison Electric Works (MEW) filed a request for approval of a special rate contract for an arrangement that would allow CMP to provide service to a new biosolids dryer facility over a pre-existing line owned by MEW (Docket No. 2025-00219). The initial proposal included a full discount on CMP's stranded cost rates.

The OPA opposed the discount because the parties failed to make the requisite showing that it was necessary. Ultimately, the parties were able to reach a settlement agreement that did not include a discount on CMP's stranded cost rates, which protects CMP's other ratepayers from paying these costs.

OPA Seeks Fines Against Versant Power in Management Audit Proceeding

In May 2025, the Commission opened a formal investigation in Docket No. 2025-00164 into deficiencies in the operation and management practices of Versant Power in response to the findings of an Audit Report prepared by a consultant for the Commission. The Commission sought to determine what remedies or corrective actions should be adopted to address those deficiencies.

The auditors recommended that the following actions be considered for implementation by Versant Power:

- Employing benchmarking across its organization,
- Adopting improved succession planning for key personnel,
- Improving Versant's IT function through having an executive-level individual in charge of IT,
- Adopting an enterprise software platform, and
- Expanding services provided by Versant's parent company, ENMAX Corporation.

In response to the Audit Report, Versant filed a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) that proposed implementation of all but two of the dozens of recommendations that came out of the Audit.

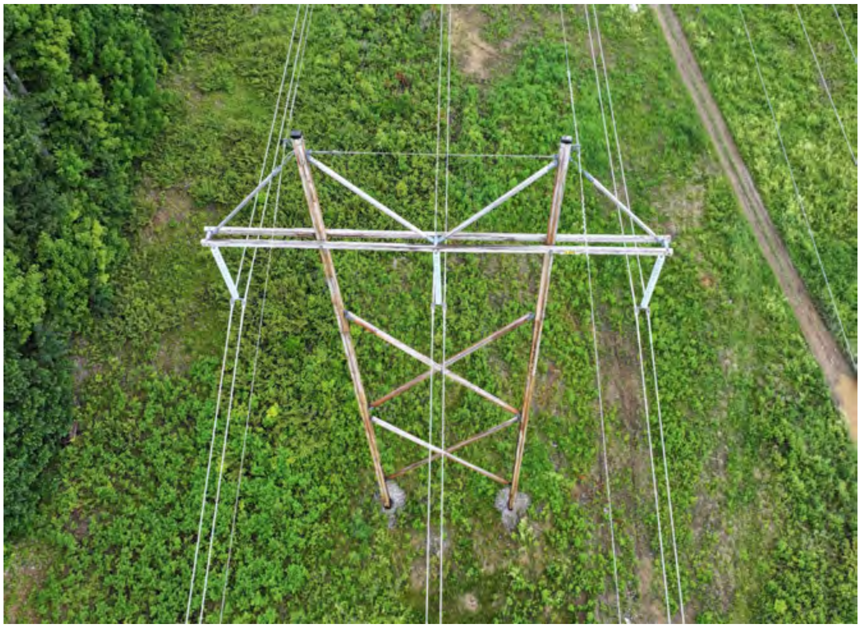
In its final written recommendations, the OPA argued that, in addition to implementation of the PIP, the Commission should impose fines against Versant Power for failing to operate in an effective, prudent and efficient manner judged by the standards prevailing in the utility industry. The OPA argued that because there was little to no monitoring of Versant's performance across multiple categories of corporate responsibilities, the combined failures rise to the level of imprudence.

The OPA ultimately reached a settlement agreement under which Versant would implement the PIP and provide $400,000 in incremental funding for low-income assistance.

OPA Earns Victory Against New England Transmission Owners

In September 2025, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) issued an order largely accepting the OPA's prudence challenge in FERC Docket No. ER20-2054 and directing the identified New England Transmission Owners (NETOs) to provide more detailed responses to questions posed by the OPA regarding “(a) how the transmission owners evaluated the asset condition project needs, (b) the procedures used to evaluate alternatives to the specific projects selected, (c) the information associated with the condition of the existing transmission assets replaced or upgraded, and (d) the procedures used to safeguard against premature project investments are all properly within the scope of the Protocols.” The OPA had argued the responses previously provided were inadequate or incomplete.

Asset condition projects involve the replacement or reconstruction of existing projects with similar facilities. The NETOs have projected that they will construct over $5 billion of these projects in the next few years, which could increase Maine electricity rates by as much as $100 million per year.



Asset condition projects in New England do not require approval from the regional grid operator, ISO New England, and in many cases do not require state approval. Further, the abbreviated rate review process employed by FERC presumes the prudence of all transmission investments unless a party challenging the inclusion of a project raises sufficient doubt. The September 2025 FERC ruling enhances the ability of concerned parties to access the information necessary to make the case that such doubt exists. The lack of sufficient transparency and accountability has contributed to an acceleration by some utilities of their investments in such projects.

The concurring opinion of Commissioner Chang explains the decision as follows:

> Ultimately, we find that the Maine OPA legitimately asked the NETOs to explain how they have arrived at their investment decisions regarding what transmission assets to upgrade, what alternatives they have considered, and how they have controlled the potential cost increases when making their transmission investments.
>
> At a time of sharply rising customer bills and increasing concern about the prudence of transmission planning decisions, transmission owners have an obligation to address those concerns and help customers, state regulators, and stakeholders better understand how their money is being spent. Transmission companies that do so in a transparent way will be able to increase consumer

> confidence, which in turn will provide long-term regulatory certainty for transmission investors. I therefore encourage transmission owners, states, and stakeholders to develop and use procedures to provide the needed information transparency to all transmission investments, especially those not planned through robust regional processes. If further action by the Commission is needed to ensure customers have access to information needed to assess the prudence of transmission owners' investments, I encourage parties to bring the issue to the Commission, as Maine OPA has done in this case.

Following the September order, Transmission Owners provided more detailed responses to the OPA's discovery requests, and in December 2025 the OPA filed a supplemental challenge in which the OPA argued that the responses raise serious doubts about the adequacy of the asset management planning processes to produce economical outcomes.

In response to the concerns raised by the OPA and other stakeholders, ISO New England began working to develop a new Asset Condition Reviewer (ACR) process that would provide review of such projects by a newly created department within ISO New England. Such review would consist of examining and providing conclusions on whether the transmission owner adequately evaluated and provided sufficient evidence consistent with Good Utility Practice to establish the need for a proposed asset condition project, and whether it adequately explored alternatives to that need. Under the proposal, the ACR's recommendations would be advisory only, meaning that Transmission Owners have the final decision regarding project design. However, the information developed by the ACR could be used to support a challenge in future rate proceedings at FERC, similar to the pending challenge of the OPA with respect to 2023 transmission rate filing. The ACR proposal, which incorporated recommended changes presented by the OPA and other consumer advocates within the region, was approved by the NEPOOL Transmission Committee in early July.

OPA Fights for Reforms in ISO New England Markets

In March 2025, ISO New England had launched a new market for "Day Ahead Ancillary Services" (DAAS). Ancillary services are all services required by the transmission or distribution system operator to enable it to maintain the integrity and stability of the system as well as the power quality. They include a variety of "reserve" products that ensure that there is adequate generation available to serve additional consumption in real time as it is added—for instance making sure there is additional electricity available when a customer turns on an appliance. ISO New England's Internal Market Monitor (IMM) estimated that during its first year of operation, DAAS added $974 million in net costs to New England consumers, adding nearly one cent to the cost of every kilowatt hour purchased.

The DAAS market was intended to assist ISO New England in planning for its operations the following day and was expected to lower energy prices by an amount that would offset most of the cost arising from the DAAS market. During the winter of 2025-26, it became clear that the cost of DAAS was far higher than expected. In response, the OPA and others urged ISO New England to explore changes to the program on an expedited basis.

ISO New England was initially reluctant to make changes to a market that had only been operating for a short time, stating that it wanted to take time to analyze the market carefully. However, under pressure from consumer advocates, other state officials, and energy marketers, the IMM developed a series of recommendations to improve the performance of the market. In June, the New England Power Pool Participants Committee approved these recommendations by a narrow margin. The IMM estimates that the changes will reduce the cost of the market by almost $300 million per year. The lower cost of this market should result in lower prices for bids to provide standard offer service for 2027.

New England Consumer Advocates Win Major Victory Against High Transmission Rates

In March, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission issued an order lowering the allowed returns on equity for New England Transmission Owners in FERC Docket No. EL11-66 et al. When implemented, this change is expected to result in a reduction in rates in New England of approximately $140 million per year, with reductions to Maine customers estimated to be $10-12 million per year. The order also reduces the allowed returns retroactively to 2014, which would require a refund to New England customers, of approximately $1.5 billion.

In 2011, the OPA joined a group of other consumer advocates and interested parties in filing the complaint that has led to this decision. The initial complaint was followed by two subsequent complaints regarding related issues, as well as many appeals. The lengthy litigation and procedural history of these cases had delayed FERC reaching this current decision.

Return on equity is the component of utility rates that represents the profit made by utilities on their investment in facilities. It is included in the calculation of electric rates as a cost, effectively the amount that is necessary to provide to investors to attract their investment. In lowering the allowed return on equity for the NETOs, FERC found that the amount previously authorized in rates was "unjust and unreasonable" because it exceeded the amount necessary to attract such investment.

FERC initially gave utilities only 30 days to disperse the required refunds. In May, however, the NETOs requested an extension of this deadline. FERC has now extended the deadline to calculate and pay those refunds to May 2027. Further, the NETOs have now appealed FERC's decision, which may further delay the timing of distribution of the full refund to customers.

In addition, the NETOs have filed a request to increase their allowed returns to 11.39%, effective June 30, in [Docket No. ER26-2389](). If allowed, such an increase would wipe out the prospective benefit to customers from FERC's order in Docket No. EL11-66. The OPA formally opposed the request, arguing that FERC should reduce the amount that NETOs can request by 60 basis points (0.60%) as a matter of law, and further requesting that any implementation be delayed and the matter set for hearing. In late June, FERC found that the NETOs' request had not been shown to be just and reasonable, stating "[b]ased on our preliminary analysis, we find that [NETOs] proposed rates may yield substantially excessive revenues." FERC declined to grant the OPA's motion to reduce rates as a matter of law. Instead, it suspended the request for a period of five months, until November 30, for the purpose of conducting an investigation into whether the proposed rates are reasonable.

> The OPA formally opposed the request, arguing that FERC should reduce the amount that New England Transmission Owners can request by 60 basis points (0.60%) as a matter of law, and further requesting that any implementation be delayed and the matter set for hearing.

Notwithstanding the NETOs' appeal and their separate request for a rate increase, the lower return on equity ordered by FERC in March will apply during 2026, providing over $100 million in savings to ratepayers in New England, of which approximately $10 million in savings will be provided to Maine consumers.

Maine OPA Files Federal Complaint Against Eversource X-178 Transmission Project

In May, the OPA filed a complaint with FERC against Eversource Energy Service Company regarding the proposed X-178 transmission project in FERC Docket No. EL26-66. The complaint argues that Eversource failed to follow existing tariff requirements by mischaracterizing the project as necessary for management of "damaged or destroyed" facilities.

The X-178 project involves the reconstruction of 49 miles of transmission facilities through the White Mountains in northern New Hampshire at an estimated cost to New England ratepayers of $360 million. This project would involve replacing approximately 580 poles despite an analysis by Eversource itself indicating that only 41 poles were currently in need of replacement. The costs of such projects are borne by ratepayers across the New England region in proportion to each region's electricity usage. Under ISO New England's practices, Eversource is permitted to move forward with the project regardless of stakeholder concerns simply because Eversource has characterized the project as an asset condition project.

The OPA was joined in its complaint by the Vermont Department of Public Service, the Connecticut Office of Consumer Counsel, the Rhode Island Department of Public Utilities and Carriers, and the New Hampshire Office of Consumer Advocate. Eversource has filed its formal answer to the complaint, and the complaint awaits further action by FERC.

OPA Successfully Defends Denial of Good Cause Exemptions Before Commission and Law Court

In 2021, the Legislature amended the net energy billing (NEB) law to impose development deadlines that projects must achieve to be eligible for the program. The most significant of these deadlines requires that projects over 1 MW must have reached commercial operation by the end of 2024. Due to lengthy cluster studies, long construction timelines, and other reasons, many proposed NEB projects failed to meet this deadline. The statute included a provision that allows a developer to seek a "good cause exemption" if they could show that an "external delay" outside of their control prevented them from achieving the deadline. Many developers filed requests for good cause exemptions in 2024 and the first part of 2025.

The OPA opposed these good cause exemptions to limit the stranded cost rate increases associated with the 2019 expansion of the NEB program.

A handful of the Commission's good cause exemption denials have been appealed to the Maine Supreme Judicial Court (the Law Court) by the developers. Since July 2025, the OPA and the PUC successfully defended the Commission's denial of a good cause exemption in Ellsworth ME Solar, LLC v. Public Utilities Commission.

Other Electric Cases

2008-00108	Request for Approval Compliance with Commission Orders in Docket No. 2007-00067.
2024-00191	Maine Public Utilities Commission Inquiry Regarding Improving Resiliency and Addressing Escalating Storm Costs.
2024-00246	Commission Initiated Investigation into Consumer Assistance and Safety Division No. 2024-V-00070.
2024-00296	Request for Approval of Tariff Revision (11/22/25) Pertaining to Central Maine Power Company.
2024-00310	Request for Approval of the Triennial Plan for Fiscal Years 2026-2028 Pertaining to Efficiency Maine Trust.
2024-00322	Request for Approval of Good Cause Exemption Pursuant to 35-A M.R.S. § 3209-A Pertaining to MSD Galbraith LLC.
2025-00078	Request for Approval of Tariff Revision of T&C § 3J Pertaining to Versant Power.
2025-00107	Commission Initiated Investigation into Consumer Assistance and Safety Division No. 2025-V-00854.
2025-00140	Request for Review of 2025 Ch 320 SQI Reports Pertaining to Central Maine Power Company.
2025-00156	Request for Review of 2025 Chapter 320 Report Pertaining to Versant Power.
2025-00166	For Approval Regarding Detroit-Guilford and Carmel Area Upgrades Pursuant to 35-A M.R.S. § 3132-A.
2025-00209	Request for Approval of a Waiver of Certain Provisions of Chapter 315 Pertaining to Versant Power.
2025-00210	Request for Approval of Tariff Revision Pertaining to Central Maine Power Company.
2025-00240	Commission Initiated Investigation into Consumer Assistance and Safety Division No. 2024-V-00847.
2025-00262	Commission Initiated Investigation into Consumer Assistance and Safety Division No. 2025-V-00403.
2025-00276	Request for Approval of Certificate of Finding of Public Convenience & Necessity for the Construction of the Greater Portland Transmission Upgrades Pertaining to Central Maine Power Company.
2025-00291	Commission Initiated Investigation into Consumer Assistance and Safety Division No. 2025-C-1922.
2025-00308	Request for Approval of Tariff Revision to T&C § 3 and 4 Pertaining to Central Maine Power Company.
2025-00311	Coordinating Procurement for Zero Carbon Electricity Generating Resources Consideration Of: Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection RFP for Zero Carbon Electricity Generating Resources Issued September 10, 2025.
2025-00312	Commission Initiated Inquiry into Flexible Interconnection.
2025-00319	Commission Initiated Request for Proposals for the Sale of Energy or Renewable Energy Credits from Eligible Distributed Generation Resources Pursuant to 35-A M.R.S. § 3209-H.
2025-00328	Commission Initiated Request for Proposals for a Clean Hydrogen Facility Pursuant to 35-A M.R.S. § 123.

2025-00334	Request for Approval of Tariff Revision to T&C § 1e and 43 Pertaining to Versant Power.
2025-00335	Request for Approval of Tariff Revision to T&C § 31 Pertaining to Versant Power.
2025-00343	Maine Public Utilities Commission Request for Information Regarding Innovative Approaches for Improving Resiliency and Addressing Escalating Storm Costs.
2025-00344	Request for Approval of a Waiver Regarding Chapter 313 Pertaining to Central Maine Power Company.
2025-00350	Commission Initiated Investigation into Consumer Assistance and Safety Division No. 2025-V-00459.
2025-00353	Request for Approval of An Accounting Order for Deferral of Incremental Storm Restoration Costs Pertaining to Versant Power.
2025-00356	Request for Approval of a Rate Change - 307 (2/1/26) Pertaining to Madison Electric Works.
2025-00361	Request for Proposals for Renewable Energy Generation and Transmission Projects Pursuant to the Northern Maine Renewable Energy Development Program 35-A M.R.S. § 3210-I.
2025-00363	Request for Approval Regarding Larrabee Road Substation Breaker Project Pursuant to 35-A M.R.S. § 3132-A.
2025-00365	Request for Approval of a Waiver of Chapter 815 § 10(M) Premise Visit Requirement Pertaining to Central Maine Power Company.
2026-00005	Complaint Pursuant to Chapter 324, § 17(C) Regarding Rewild Renewables LLC Pertaining to Central Maine Power Company.
2026-00008	Complaint Pursuant to Chapter 324 § 17(C) Regarding Sturgeon Quarry Solar LLC Pertaining to Central Maine Power Company.
2026-00018	Commission Initiated Investigation into Consumer Assistance and Safety Division No. 2025-V-00779.
2026-00022	Request for Approval of Annual Adjustment of Line Extension Pricing Pursuant to Ch 395 Pertaining to Central Maine Power Company.
2026-00025	Request for General Counsel Opinion Regarding Issuance of the NEB Agreement Pertaining to Central Maine Power Company.
2026-00030	Annual and Quarterly Reports Related to Chapter 320 Pertaining to Versant Power.
2026-00032	Request for Approval of Annual Filing of Chapter 395 10(G) Single Phase Line Extension Pertaining to Versant Power.
2026-00033	Request for Proposals for Renewable Energy Generation and Transmission Projects Pursuant to the Northern Maine Renewable Energy Development Program 35-A M.R.S. § 32010-I (Formerly Docket No. 2025-00361).
2026-00035	Request for Approval of Tariff Revision (3/15/26) Pertaining to Kennebunk Light & Power District.
2026-00036	Petition for Adoption or Modification of Rule 35-A M.R.S. § 3201 and 3202 and Chapter 305 Pertaining to NRG Energy Inc.
2026-00037	Commission Initiated Investigation to Determine Net Energy Billing Project Charge Adjustment Formula.
2026-00038	Request for Advisory Ruling Related to Private and Direct Sales of Electricity Pertaining to PF Land LLC.

2026-00045	Coordinating Procurement for Zero Carbon Electricity Generating Resources, Consideration Of: Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection RFP for Zero Carbon Electricity Generation Issued January 30, 2026.
2026-00048	Commission Initiated Investigation Regarding Customer Notification and Termination of Shared Financial Interest Net Energy Billing Arrangements Under Chapter 313.
2026-00053	Commission Initiated Summary Investigation Seeking Comment On 2025 Net Energy Billing Cost Benefit Report.
2026-00055	Complaint Pursuant to Chapter 324 § 17(C) Regarding Revision Energy Inc Pertaining to Central Maine Power Company.
2026-00065	Commission Initiated Standard Offer Bidding Process Pertaining to Central Maine Power Company and Versant Power Secure Docket.
2026-00066	Commission Initiated Investigation into Consumer Assistance and Safety Division No. 2025-V-00834.
2026-00067	Request for Approval of Tariff Revision (4/20/26) Pertaining to Kennebunk Light & Power District.
2026-00073	Commission Initiated Investigation into Consumer Assistance and Safety Division No. 2025-V-00765.
2026-00082	Request for Approval 2025 Annual Revenue Decoupling Mechanism Adjustment Pertaining to Versant Power.
2026-00085	Request for Approval of a Waiver Regarding Chapter 313 Pertaining to Nexamp.
2026-00107	Commission Initiated Investigation into Consumer Assistance and Safety Division No. 2025-V-00854.
2026-00111	Commission Initiated Investigation into Consumer Assistance and Safety Division No. 2025-V-00715.
2026-00119	Request for Approval for Waiver of Chapter 324 § 18 Pertaining to Eastern Maine Electric Co-Op Inc.
2026-00133	Commission Initiated Investigation into Consumer Assistance and Safety Division No. 2025-V-00795.
2026-00134	Commission Initiated Rulemaking for Review and Approval of Requests for Proposals and Contracts Submitted by the Department of Energy Resources Chapter 398.
2026-00135	Request for General Counsel Opinion Regarding Offset of O&M Charges with Tariff Rate NEB Credits Pertaining to Versant Power.
2026-00137	Request for Review of 2026 Chapter 320 SQI Reports Pertaining to Versant Power.
2026-00142	Commission Initiated Informal Investigation Regarding Development of Large Data Centers.
2026-00146	Request for Approval of Certificate of Finding of Public Convenience & Necessity Pertaining to Kennebunk Light & Power District.
2026-00148	Maine Public Utilities Commission Investigation Regarding Notification Form for Certain Sizes of Plug-In Photovoltaic or Battery Systems.
2026-00156	Commission Review of 2026 Emergency Response Plans Pertaining to Versant Power and Central Maine Power Company.
2026-00172	Commission Initiated Audit of Interconnection Cost Assessment Practices Regarding Central Maine Power Company and Versant Power.

Other Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) Cases

EL25-106	New England Power Generators Association v. ISO New England Inc.
EL26-27	Kristina Pastoriza and Ruth Ward v. Public Service Company of New Hampshire.
EL26-57	Adam Gaal v. ISO New England Inc.
EL26-72	Order to Show Cause Regarding Large Load Interconnections re ISO New England, et al.
EL26-79	Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, et al. v. The Connecticut Light & Power Company, et al.
RM26-4	Interconnection of Large Loads to the Interstate Transmission System.
ER25-2975	Central Maine Power Company Amendment to Wholesale Distribution Access Tariff.
ER26-2903	Chester SVC Partnership Amended Facilities Support Agreement ER26-928.

Ratepayer Savings from Electric Cases

Source	Reference	Ratepayer Savings
Storm Cost Savings in CMP's Annual Compliance Filing	Docket No. 2025-00018	$160,000
Lewiston Energy Credit Costs in CMP's Stranded Cost Reconciliation Filing	Docket No. 2025-00019	$494,000
Maine Public Utilities Commission Investigation of Operations and Management Practices of Versant Power	Docket No. 2025-00164	$400,000
Consumer Advocates Challenge of Return on Equity allowed for New England Transmission Owners	FERC Docket No. EL11-66	$10,000,000
CMP Distribution Rate Case Dismissal	Docket No. 2025-00218	$107,300,000
	Total Savings	$118,354,000


Christmas Harbor

Natural Gas

Summit Natural Gas Will File Reports on Its Peaks Natural Gas Digester Facility

Summit has received approval to permanently change the minimum delivery pressure at which Peaks delivers natural gas into the Summit system (Docket No. 2020-00089). At the urging of the OPA, Summit is required to report on the final costs incurred within 60 days of completion of the system upgrades needed to accommodate that change. Summit must also timely file the quarterly reports it agreed to when the Peaks affiliate project was first approved in 2020, regarding the quantity and cost of gas purchased by Summit and the quantity of gas sold to and the revenue received from Peaks.

Summit Natural Gas of Maine is Permitted to Increase its Cost of Gas Charge

On September 26, 2025, the PUC approved Summit's new Cost of Gas (COG) rate for October 1, 2025 through September 20, 2026 (Docket No. 2025-00213). The PUC agreed with the OPA that Summit must provide in each future annual COG rate filing a breakdown of the components used in the lost & unaccounted for (LAUF) calculation to assist staff's and the OPA's understanding of the primary influences on the COG being proposed.

OPA Successfully Argues for Disallowance of Operational Flow Order Penalties and for Discussions Regarding the Development of Metrics and Benchmarks to Evaluate Daily Load Forecasts

On October 28, 2025, the PUC approved the Annual Report of Cost of Gas Activities filed by Bangor Natural Gas (Docket No. 2025-00182). But the PUC agreed with the OPA's request to disallow cost recovery of approximately $32,900 in operational flow order (OFO) penalties because the penalties were a result of Bangor's failure to nominate sufficient supply to avoid OFO penalties.

The PUC also accepted an OPA recommendation that Bangor Gas pursue the development of benchmarks regarding its daily load forecasts. The PUC directed the OPA and Bangor Gas to meet to discuss the development of metrics and appropriate benchmarks to evaluate the gas supply and planning process. Bangor Gas is required to include in its next annual cost of gas report its proposal for setting gas supply metrics and benchmarks.

Merger Between Unitil and Maine Natural Gas is Approved Subject to an Increase in Its Low-Income Discount Program, Green House Gas Reporting, and a Rate Increase Stay-Out

On September 12, 2025, the PUC approved the merger of Maine Natural Gas (MNG) into Unitil under the terms set out in a Stipulation. (Docket No. 2025-00143) As some of the conditions of approval, MNG agreed at the OPA's urging to calculate, report, and mitigate greenhouse gas emissions, not seek recovery of any employee retention payments, and agree not to file a general rate case for MNG until June 1, 2027. MNG will also adopt the same residential low-income discount that is currently available to Unitil's Northern Utilities customers—30% discount on customer's total bill. This represents an increased benefit from MNG's existing residential low-income discount program, which provides a 28% discount on the customer charge and delivery components of the bill.

Commission Agrees with the OPA that Unitil's Northern Utilities Must Discuss the Development of Metrics to Assess Its Demand Forecast Models

During the Winter 2025-26 Cost of Gas proceeding for Unitil's Northern Utilities operating territory, the OPA recommended that the utility be required to establish clear and measurable metrics for its daily demand/load forecasting and to provide documentation showing actual forecast performance relative to established benchmarks (Docket No. 2025-00248). The Commission agreed, ordering Unitil to meet with the OPA to discuss the development of performance metrics and benchmarks and to include a proposal in its next summer Cost of Gas filing.

OPA recommended that the utility be required to establish clear and measurable metrics for its daily demand/load forecasting and to provide documentation showing actual forecast performance relative to established benchmarks.

Unitil Agrees to Adopt the Metrics Suggested by the OPA to Assess Its Demand Forecast Models

On February 16, Unitil agreed to adopt and track the following OPA-proposed metrics for its demand forecast models in its Northern Utilities territory, as part of its summer cost of gas filing (Docket No. 2026-00034):

- Mean Absolute Percentage Error ("MAPE"),
- MAPE for the coldest 10% of days,
- Mean Percentage error across the heating season, and
- Mean Percentage error for the coldest days.

Accurate daily demand forecasting is essential because it ensures that the utility procures the right amount of gas each day to maintain reliable service for customers, it reduces the need to rely on expensive intraday or spot-market purchases, and it helps Unitil avoid expensive penalties during periods of extreme weather.

Other Natural Gas Cases

2014-00298	Summit Natural Gas - Request for Approval of An Affiliated Interest Transaction.
2025-00145	Maine Public Utilities Commission Inquiry Regarding Future of Natural Gas.
2025-00151	Maine Natural Gas - Request for Approval of Cost of Gas Filing.
2025-00161	Request for Exemption from Regulatory Approval of a Reorganization Resulting from the Acquisition of Certain Water Utilities in Massachusetts and New Hampshire Pertaining to Northern Utilities Inc D/B/A Unitil Inc.
2025-00207	Request for Approval to Return Prior Assessment Funds to Customers Pertaining to Summit Natural Gas of Maine.
2025-00282	Request for Approval of Tariff Revision (1/1/26) Pertaining to Summit Natural Gas of Maine, Inc.
2025-00320	Request for Approval of a Special Rate Contract Pertaining to Bangor Natural Gas Company.
2026-00049	Request for Approval of Rate Change - 307 Pertaining to Northern Utilities Inc. D/B/A Unitil Inc.
2026-00083	Request for Approval of An Affiliated Interest Transaction with Granite State Gas Transmission Inc. Pertaining to Northern Utilities, Inc. D/B/A Unitil Inc.
2026-00131	Request for Approval of Cost of Gas Filings Pertaining to Maine Natural Gas Corporation.
2026-00173	Request for Approval of Annual 2026 Cost of Gas Activities Report Pertaining to Bangor Natural Gas Company.
2026-00180	Request for Approval of Annual Cost of Gas Filings 2026 Pertaining to Summit Natural Gas of Maine Inc.

Other Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) Cases

PL18-1 & PL21-3-000	Proposed Revisions to 2022 Draft Greenhouse Gas and Certificate Policy.
RP25-40	Granite State Gas Transmission, Inc. - Section 4 Rate Increase Filing.
PL18-1	Certification of New Interstate Natural Gas Facilities.

Ratepayer Savings from Gas Cases

Source	Docket Number	Ratepayer Savings
Bangor Natural Gas Company, Inc.	Docket No. 2025-00182	$32,900
	Total Savings	$32,900

Water

PUC Agrees with OPA That New Rates Sought by the Loring Development Authority (LDA) Were Too High

On May 12, the PUC issued an Order approving an annual revenue requirement for the Loring Development Authority (LDA) of $547,000 (Docket No. 2024-00300). LDA had sought a revenue requirement of $721,000, amounting to ratepayer savings of $174,000. The PUC found that LDA had produced substantial evidence to support much of its proposed revenue requirement, but adjusted certain costs claimed by LDA. Key aspects of the PUC's Order include a determination that customers should be billed based on appropriately sized meters rather than legacy meter sizes installed for prior uses, and a finding that the resulting rates for most residential customers would be slightly lower than the temporary rates that the Complainants had sought to remain in effect. The PUC also urged LDA to proactively seek state and federal grants and other third-party funding "so as to relieve the burden on a handful of residential ratepayers to fund a water system designed to serve thousands of users."

Machias Water Company Agrees to Reduce Its Requested Revenue Requirement and Other Conditions

On September 4, 2025, the PUC approved a 27.26% rate increase for Machias Water Company (Docket No. 2024-00326). The total annual rate increase will be just over $140,000. Machias had requested over $178,000, amounting to ratepayer savings of $38,000. In addition, Machias agreed to certain conditions, including:

- The Company's engagement of an accountant to identify the staffing needs of similarly situated water utilities to justify the number of employees in the Company's next rate case;
- Consideration by the Company of specific factors when determining the grading and size of any bonuses;
- Periodic review of the Company's comprehensive plan regarding system infrastructure needs; and
- Use by the Company of regulatory liability accounts to track and record certain legal expenses.

PUC Approves Unified Rates for The Maine Water Company Along with a New Water Ratepayer Assistance Program

On January 13, the PUC approved a Stipulation entered into by The Maine Water Company (MWC) and the OPA which provided for (Docket No. 2024-00378):

- Company-wide unification of metered rates and approval of transitional metered rates and a unified water infrastructure surcharge (WISC) rate, effective February 1;

- A portion of the regulatory proceeding costs incurred in connection with the litigation of this proceeding, in the amount of $135,000, will be borne by shareholders rather than ratepayers; and
- Implementation of a Water Ratepayer Assistance Program (WRAP) for low-income customers, where residential customers of MWC who meet the eligibility requirements for the Low-Income Assistance Program for electricity are eligible to receive a 22 percent discount on their total water bill.

In addition, the stipulation includes several provisions related to MWC's water infrastructure surcharge (WISC) filings pursuant to Chapter 675 of the Commission's rules including that the Company:

- Provide notice to customers each time it files a request to increase the WISC rate;
- Submit a System Infrastructure Assessment Report for all 10 of MWC's divisions prior to MWC's next WISC filing; and
- Refrain from filing a WISC Application for six months after the rate effective date for the Company's 2026 Rate Case.


Kennebec Water District

PUC Approves Maine Water Company's Reorganization for H2O Risk Solutions Subject to Conditions to Protect Customers

In December 2025, the Commission approved Maine Water Company's request to reorganize in connection with the creation of a new affiliated interest, H2O America Risk Solutions (Docket No. 2025-00288). Risk Solutions will procure general liability, auto liability, and workers' compensation insurance on behalf of Maine Water and its sister operating companies. To ensure the reorganization is in the public interest and does not adversely affect ratepayers or investors, the Commission required that, if Maine Water elects to obtain insurance through Risk Solutions, the Company provide in its next rate proceeding all details of the transaction with Risk Solutions including the approved contracts between the Company or H2O America, and Risk Solutions and any evaluation conducted in MWC's insurance selection process.

PUC Agrees with the OPA that Maine Water Company Must Seek Additional Approval to Borrow Funds Exceeding What Was Approved

In December 2025, the Commission authorized the Maine Water Company to enter into a revolving credit facility with J.P. Morgan in a sum not to exceed $25 million, at an interest rate not to exceed the Secured Overnight Funding Rate plus 100 basis points, for a term of 5 years with the option for two one-year extensions (Docket No. 2025-00294). The OPA argued that the MWC's Board only approved a $25 million credit facility and that this amount was lower than the $50 million maximum borrowing amount in the credit agreement between MWC and the lender. The PUC agreed and included as condition of approval that before increasing the credit line beyond $25 million, the Company must seek further approval from the PUC.

Other Water Cases

2025-00120	Commission Initiated Investigation - Houlton Water Company and the Potential Disconnection of Water Service to the Houlton Mobile Home Park.
2025-00161	Northern Utilities Inc D/B/A Unitil, Inc. Request for Exemption from Regulatory Approval of a Reorganization Resulting from the Acquisition of Certain Water Utilities in Massachusetts and New Hampshire.
2024-00300	10 Person Complaint Concerning Increase in Rates Pertaining to Loring Development Authority.
2025-00228	Request for Approval of Sale or Transfer of Water Resource Land Pertaining to West Paris Water District.
2025-00229	Request for Approval of Rate Change - 307 (9/1/25) Pertaining to Pine Springs Roads & Water, LLC.
2025-00374	Request for Approval of Issue of Securities Pertaining to Fryeburg Water Company.
2026-00028	Request for Approval of Rate Change -307 Pertaining to the Maine Water Company.
2026-00051	Request for Approval of Water Infrastructure Charge Request Pertaining to the Maine Water Company.
2026-00052	Request for Approval of Tariff Revision (6/1/26) Pertaining to Lubec Water District.
2026-00061	Request for Approval of Rate Change - 6104 (6/1/26) Pertaining to North Jay Water District.
2026-00070	10 Person Complaint Concerning Increase in Rates Pertaining to Bar Harbor Water Division.
2026-00106	Request for Approval of Tariff Revision System Development Charge (7/16/26) Pertaining to York Water District.
2026-00139	Request for Approval of Tariff Revision (7/1/26) Pertaining to Kittery Water District.
2026-00144	Request for Approval of Rate Change - 6104 (10/1/26) Pertaining to North Haven Water Department.

Ratepayer Savings from Water Cases

Source	Reference	Ratepayer Savings
Machias Water Company Request for Approval of Rate Increase	Docket No. 2024-00326	$38,000
The Maine Water Company Request for Approval of Unified Rate Schedules	Docket No. 2024-00378	$135,000
10 Person Complaint Concerning Increase in Rates Pertaining to Loring Development Authority	Docket No. 2024-00300	$174,000
	Total Savings	**$347,000**

Ferry

OPA Urges the PUC to Investigate Casco Bay Ferry Rate Increases

The OPA urged the PUC to investigate the Casco Bay Island Transit District (CBITD) rate increases for vehicles (Docket No. 2025-00160) and passengers (Docket No. 2026-00136), following 50-person petitions for review that were filed by Peaks Island residents.

In the vehicle rate proceeding, the Commission found that Peaks Island residents who do not travel frequently enough to justify an annual or 90-day pass, will experience vehicle rate increases that vary between 91% and 173%, depending on the season and day of the week. For residents transporting vehicles only on Wednesdays under the former discounted rate, the peak period vehicle rate increase is over 300% as compared to the current non-passholder rate Sunday thru Wednesday. The PUC directed CBITD to explore "...options to reduce the impact on such residents identified above, such as through a discount." The Commission has not yet opened a formal investigation into the CBITD vehicle rate increases.

Reasonable rate design should include a discounted passbook, a return to reduced fare Wednesdays or other means to ensure that year-round residents, particularly low- and moderate-income residents, have access to ferry service at an affordable cost.

The Commission did open an investigation into the passenger rate increases. (Docket No. 2026-00136) stating:

> ...the Commission finds that the Complainants have raised sufficient concerns regarding the affordability of ferry travel for low-to-moderate income island residents, and raised colorable allegations of procedural irregularities in the rate setting process to warrant a formal adjudicatory proceeding.

Casco Bay Ferry

The OPA continues to advocate that Maine law requires the Commission to consider the rate impact on year-round island residents. Reasonable rate design should include a discounted passbook, a return to reduced fare Wednesdays or other means to ensure that year-round residents, particularly low- and moderate-income residents, have access to ferry service at an affordable cost.

Climate Change

Efforts to combat climate change play a role in many proceedings before the PUC. Under the OPA's authorizing statute, our mandate is to ensure that our positions on behalf of consumers are consistent with the cost-effective implementation of the greenhouse gas emissions reductions required by State law. The OPA addressed this issue of cost-effective implementation on behalf of Maine ratepayers in a number of PUC proceedings, including the following dockets:

Maine Public Utilities Commission Proceeding to Identify Priorities for Grid Plan Filings.

In January, CMP and Versant filed their first integrated grid plans (Docket No. 2022-00322). After reviewing these plans, the OPA suggested that ratepayer costs could be reduced as utilities prepare the grid for greater use of electric vehicles and heat pumps by implementing ambient adjusted ratings to reduce the investments needed to serve new electric loads, particularly in winter, and updating construction and materials standards. New standards are needed that incorporate the cost-effectiveness of reliability investments over the life of the materials so that ratepayers won't overpay for unneeded reliability measures. The PUC will hold a series of workshops on these and other suggestions as a follow-on to the first integrated grid plans and to prepare for the next round of such submissions.

OPA Urges PUC to Keep Strong Focus on Ratepayer Costs in Development of the Northern Maine Renewable Energy Request for Proposals

The Northern Maine Renewable Energy Development Program is a key part of the long-term regional strategy to reduce transmission congestion, allowing the integration of renewable energy resources from northern Maine into the southern New England grid. The OPA supported the proposed allocation of 70% of the total scoring to consideration of ratepayer costs and benefits (Docket No. 2024-00099). The OPA urged the Commission to avoid including in the RFP mechanisms that unnecessarily shift risks from project developers to ratepayers.

OPA Suggests Further Exploration of Electric Rate Designs to Help Encourage Efficient Use of the Electric Grid

In June 2025, the PUC initiated a formal investigation of opt-out time-of-use rates for residential standard offer supply and delivery (Docket No. 2025-00176). The OPA suggested that other rate designs, including peak time rebates, critical peak pricing, and EV-only rates could be a more cost-effective and customer-centric approach, particularly given the limitations of our utilities' existing metering, settlement, and billing systems. The Commission agreed to expand the scope of the investigation. The OPA is now working with all parties to resolve the investigation in the most cost-effective manner for customers.

Maine Public Utilities Commission Inquiry Regarding Future of Natural Gas.

In May 2025, the PUC opened an inquiry regarding the future of natural gas (Docket No. 2025-00145). In response, the OPA recommended eliminating subsidies that encourage gas system expansion, such as line extension policies, to help prevent stranded assets. At a minimum, the OPA recommended that a cost-benefit analysis should estimate the net present value of costs associated with each option, evaluate expected bill impacts on customers, and assess emissions impacts. This approach supports planning decisions that balance reliability needs, customer bill impacts, and long-term climate objectives. The OPA urged the PUC to take action to provide guidance on ways utilities can avoid greenhouse gas emissions and reduce costs for ratepayers.

More information on climate-related initiatives is provided in the Climate News section of the OPA's monthly Highlights newsletter.


Scarborough

Other PUC Cases

Rulemaking Cases

2024-00186	Commission Initiated Inquiry into Proposed Amendments and Chapter 110 Rules of Practice and Procedure.
2025-00154	Commission Initiated Inquiry Regarding Possible Amendments to Chapter 880 of the Commission's Rules.
2025-00241	MPUC Amendments to Chapter 314 Statewide Low-Income Assistance Plan Rule.
2025-00264	Public Utilities Commission Amendments to Net Energy Billing Rule Chapter 313.
2025-00279	Commission Initiated Rulemaking for Notice Regarding Property Subject to Eminent Domain for or Abutting a High Impact Transmission Line Chapter 331.
2025-00303	Commission Initiated Inquiry into Issues Related to Chapter 324 of the Commission's Rules.
2025-00322	Commission Initiated Rulemaking to Amend Chapter 3 of the Emergency Services Communication Bureau Rules Regarding Soft Dial to NE.
2025-00323	Commission Initiated Rulemaking for a Dispatch Center and Public Safety Answering Point Consolidation Grant Program Chapter 4.
2025-00330	Commission Initiated Rulemaking Amendments to Chapter 420 of the Commission's Rules Safety Standards for Natural Gas and Liquefied Natural Gas Facility Operators (LD 1473).
2026-00020	Commission Initiated Rulemaking to Repeal and Replace Chapter 206 Standards for Designating and Certifying Eligible Telecommunications Carriers Qualified to Receive Federal Universal Service Fund Support.

Telecommunications Cases

2024-00272	Commission Initiated Inquiry – Lifeline-Only Eligible Telecommunications Carriers.
2026-00115	TDS Telecommunications - Request of Commission Investigation Regarding Fidium Enterprises Services.

Nonwires Alternatives Cases

2024-00321	Commission Initiated Inquiry of Non-wires Alternatives Information Repository (Reporting Docket).
2025-00307	Commission Initiated Inquiry Regarding Review of the Non-wires Alternatives Investigation and Recommendation Process.

Access PUC Dockets Online

To learn more about any of the PUC proceedings mentioned in this report, please visit the Public Utilities Commission's Case Management System (CMS). Make note of the docket number of the case of interest and enter it in the search feature.

Legislative Advocacy

The Second Session of the 132nd Legislature convened on January 7 and adjourned on April 14, returning on April 29 for an additional "veto" session. The OPA regularly attended public hearings and work sessions of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology (EUT), presenting testimony and answering the legislators' questions.

This session, the EUT took up 30 bills and several Gubernatorial nominations for the Maine Connectivity Authority and the Efficiency Maine Trust. The OPA actively worked on ten of these bills and testified on fifteen. As the Committee considers each legislative proposal, the OPA provides legislators with an analysis of how each proposal could impact affordability, particularly for residential customers and low-income households. Our priority areas of engagement this year were low-income assistance and electricity affordability.

The session was characterized by largely partisan votes both in Committee and in the Legislature as a whole. At its conclusion, the Legislature had enacted 23 energy and utility-related bills. We were pleased that our bill ensuring that LIAP recipients are not charged more than the standard offer passed with nearly unanimous bipartisan approval in both the EUT and later the Legislature. We were especially excited that LD 995, *An Act to Provide Funding for Low-income Electric Ratepayer Assistance,* which had passed last session with tremendous support, was moved from the Appropriations Table to the baseline budget. This $7.5 million in yearly funding for LIAP is a huge win, especially as it is on-going funding and is specifically worded to be in addition to ratepayer funding approved by the PUC.

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The OPA had several other significant wins on utility affordability and laid the groundwork for successful advocacy in the coming Legislative session. In addition, throughout the past session, we maintained our position that the carefully negotiated provisions of the NEB Reform (LD 1777) that passed in 2025 should be respected.

Key Wins on Energy Affordability and Consumer Protections

Energy Affordability as a Primary Consideration for the PUC

PL 2026, Chapter 588 (LD 1949, Sen. Anne Carney, D - Cumberland) "*An Act Regarding Energy Fairness*" (Signed March 23, 2026)

The Energy Fairness Act, which carried over from the First Session of the 132nd Legislature, was enacted during the Second Session following extensive work by the Legislature's Energy, Utilities and Technology Committee. Throughout the process, the OPA worked closely with the bill's sponsor to refine the legislation and strengthen its consumer-focused provisions.

Together, these provisions advance the OPA's mission by embedding affordability considerations into utility regulation and increasing public access to information about utility practices that affect Maine households.

The law includes several significant protections for Maine ratepayers:

- Requires the Public Utilities Commission to consider affordability in carrying out its duties;
- Directs the PUC to develop an electricity affordability metric; and
- Improves transparency by making utility credit and collections data from Central Maine Power and Versant more readily available to the public.

Together, these provisions advance the OPA's mission by embedding affordability considerations into utility regulation and increasing public access to information about utility practices that affect Maine households.

Ending a Costly and Out-Dated Incentive to Electric Utilities in Maine

PL 2026 Chapter 646 (LD 2038, Rep. Christopher Kessler, D - South Portland) "*An Act to Require Maine Transmission and Distribution Utility Participation in a Regional Transmission Organization*" (Signed April 6, 2026)

For decades, federal policy has provided electric utilities with a 0.5% return on equity incentive for voluntarily joining a regional transmission organization such as ISO-New England. However, recent decisions by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, upheld by the U.S. Courts of Appeals for the Sixth and Ninth Circuits in 2025, determined that utilities required by state law to participate in a regional transmission organization are no longer eligible for this incentive.

In response, the Maine Legislature enacted LD 2038, making membership in ISO New England mandatory for Maine's investor-owned utilities, Central Maine Power and Versant. The OPA played a key role in advancing the legislation and will petition FERC in 2026 to eliminate the ROE adder for these utilities.

Once approved, Maine ratepayers are expected to save more than $2 million annually, beginning next year.

Once approved, Maine ratepayers are expected to save more than $2 million annually, beginning next year. Because transmission costs are largely shared across the ISO-New England region, even greater savings are possible if other New England states adopt similar policies. Maine ratepayers could save more than $5 million annually if all New

England states enact comparable legislation. Connecticut became the first state in the region to do so in 2025, and the OPA continues to work with consumer advocates throughout New England to encourage broader adoption of these consumer-focused reforms.

Ensuring that LIAP Recipients are not Overcharged for Electricity

PL 2026 Chapter 640 (LD 2203, Rep. Melanie Sachs, D - Freeport) "*An Act to Limit Rates Charged to Low-income Electricity Consumers*" (Signed April 3, 2026)

The OPA's January presentation to the Legislature's EUT Committee on the Electric Ratepayer Advisory Council's (ERAC) report, "Is Maine's CEP-Served Residential Retail Electric Supply Market Affordable?" resulted in the development of LD 2203. The report and other recent analyses have consistently demonstrated that Maine households purchasing electricity from competitive electricity providers (CEPs) often pay substantially more than customers receiving standard offer service. Between 2016 and 2024, Maine residential customers paid more than $156 million above standard offer rates.

Data access provided through LD 860, enacted in 2025, enabled the OPA to conduct its most comprehensive analysis of the CEP market to date. Using confidential customer data supplied by Central Maine Power and Versant, the OPA found that participants in the Low-Income Assistance Program (LIAP) are more likely to purchase electricity from CEPs and, on average, pay higher supply rates than non-LIAP customers.

Using confidential customer data supplied by Central Maine Power and Versant, the OPA found that participants in the Low-Income Assistance Program (LIAP) are more likely to purchase electricity from CEPs and, on average, pay higher supply rates than non-LIAP customers.

In response, the Legislature enacted LD 2203, ensuring that LIAP participants pay no more than the standard offer rate for electricity supply. This protection is especially important as LIAP transitions in October 2026 from a lump-sum benefit to a monthly bill discount. Under the new program design, higher electricity supply costs would directly reduce the value of limited assistance funds intended to help vulnerable households.

By establishing a price cap for LIAP recipients enrolled with CEPs, LD 2203 helps safeguard public resources and ensures that low-income Mainers receive the full benefit of the assistance available to them. The OPA was pleased to bring forward this measure, which passed with strong bipartisan support in both the EUT Committee and the Legislature.

Strengthening Maine's Low-Income Assistance Program

Addressing energy affordability remained a top priority during the Second Session of the 132nd Legislature. Building on the momentum of LD 995, *An Act to Provide Funding for Low-*

income Electric Ratepayer Assistance, the Legislature ultimately included ongoing support for the Low-Income Assistance Program in the supplemental budget bill, LD 2212, which was signed into law on April 10, 2026.

LD 995 originally proposed a $15 million General Fund appropriation to provide $7.5 million in LIAP funding during each of the next two program years. The bill received overwhelming support from the Legislature's Energy, Utilities and Technology Committee and passed both chambers during the previous session.

Recognizing the growing challenge of energy affordability, the Legislature ultimately went further by approving $7.5 million in ongoing baseline General Fund support for LIAP. These taxpayer-funded dollars supplement, rather than replace, funding collected from ratepayers through the Public Utilities Commission.

This investment represents a significant milestone in Maine's efforts to improve energy affordability.

This investment represents a significant milestone in Maine's efforts to improve energy affordability. By establishing a permanent state funding commitment for LIAP, the Legislature helped ensure that low-income households will continue to receive meaningful assistance paying their electric bills in the years ahead.

Improving Transparency in Maine's Solar Marketplace

PL 2026 Chapter 575 (LD 1964, Sen. Russell Black, R – Franklin, Rep. Steven Foster, R - Dexter) "*An Act to Establish Additional Requirements Related to the Sale or Lease of Net Energy Billing Interests and Solar Energy Equipment*"

The OPA hears regularly from consumers who are confused about their solar subscriptions, billing arrangements, or even the identity of their solar provider. Customers frequently contact the OPA seeking assistance understanding charges and credits appearing on their electric bills or locating contact information for companies associated with their accounts.

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In response to these concerns, the Legislature enacted LD 1964, emergency legislation which strengthens consumer protections and improves transparency in Maine's expanding solar market. The law requires standardized written disclosures for the sale or lease of solar energy equipment, helping consumers better understand the terms of their agreements before making purchasing decisions.

In addition, the legislation requires Maine's investor-owned utilities to provide the PUC's Interconnection Ombudsman with annual interconnection cost data by project size. The PUC will publish this information, giving consumers, developers, and policymakers greater insight into the costs associated with connecting solar projects to the electric grid.

By improving transparency and addressing problematic sales practices, this legislation represents an important step toward ensuring that Maine consumers can participate in the state's clean energy economy with confidence and access to the information they need.

Eliminating the sales tax on residential electricity

One proposal considered during the Second Session of the 132nd Legislature, LD 2078, *An Act to Exempt from Sales Tax the Sale and Delivery of All Residential Electricity*, sought to eliminate the state sales tax on residential electric bills.

> LD 2078 received strong bipartisan support and passed both chambers of the Legislature by significant margins.

Maine's sales tax on electricity is a remnant of an earlier era, when policymakers sought to discourage high electricity use because it was viewed as a comparatively expensive source of heat and energy. Today, electricity plays a central role in Maine's energy future, powering increasingly efficient technologies such as heat pumps, electric vehicles, and modern appliances. Encouraging the use of electricity is now aligned with both affordability and the state's broader energy and climate goals. Sponsored by Representative Kilton Webb (D-Durham), LD 2078 received strong bipartisan support and passed both chambers of the Legislature by significant margins. However, despite broad legislative backing, the bill's estimated fiscal impact—approximately $6 million annually in foregone state revenue—prevented it from advancing beyond the Appropriations Table.

If enacted, the proposal would provide direct savings to households across the state by reducing the cost of an essential service. The OPA supported the legislation throughout the session and will continue to advocate for eliminating the residential electricity sales tax as part of its broader commitment to improving energy affordability for Maine ratepayers.

The OPA published testimony on these and other bills during the legislative session on our website.

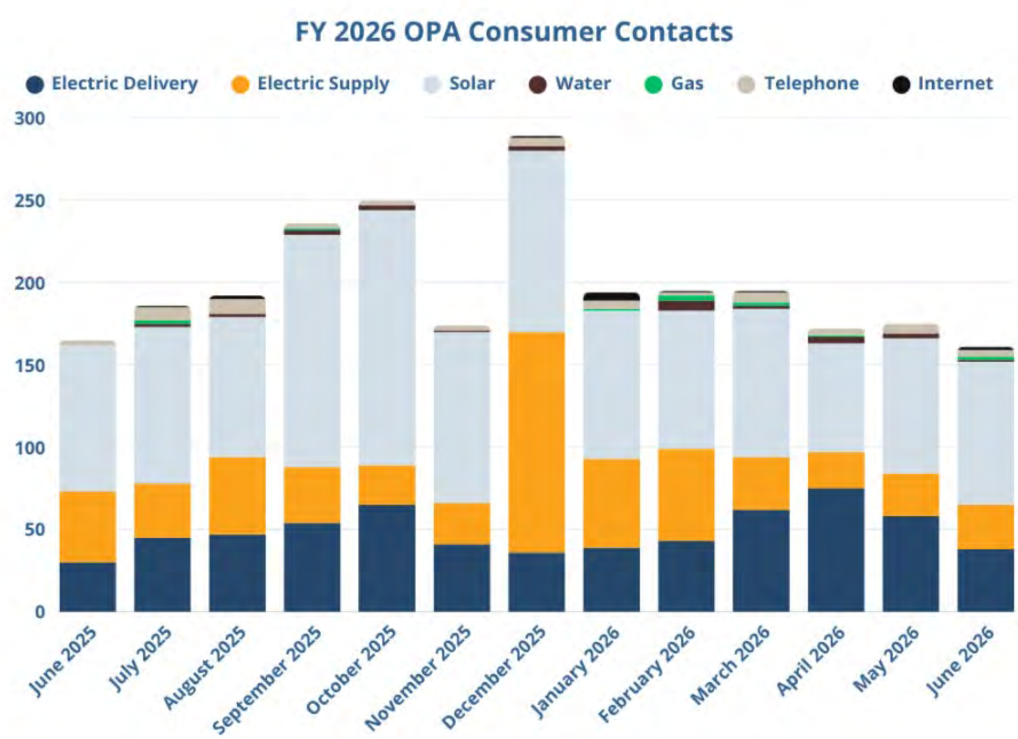
Consumer Advising and Outreach

In addition to advocating on customers' behalf at the Maine Legislature, Public Utilities Commission, ISO New England, and Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, the Office of the Public Advocate also provides one-on-one support for consumers voicing utility concerns.

The Consumer Advisor is available to answer questions, provide advice, and as needed, connect consumers to other OPA staff with relevant expertise. Consumers will typically contact the OPA via telephone, email, or with in-person visits. This fiscal year, we assisted more than 2,584 customers.

In FY 2026 we attended and hosted 30 public events, including electric bill reduction presentations in partnership with AARP, Customer Connection events in partnership with Central Maine Power, and other speaking engagements throughout the year.

As demonstrated by the graph below, electricity-related questions drove the majority of consumer contacts in FY2026, including Community Solar, Electric Delivery, and Electric Supply.



Our Consumer Advisor can help these electricity consumers navigate their electric supply and delivery rate options, dig into causes behind high usage, and connect with their community solar companies for information and support. One such consumer recently shared his appreciation:

> I called today at 2:26 p.m. and spoke with a woman whose name I, unfortunately, cannot recall. I had been dealing with some troubling issues related to a solar farm, and after months of calling and trying to understand what was happening, she was able to clearly explain the situation better than anyone at any solar company had done before.
>
> In just 12 minutes, she not only provided me with the clarity I needed but also helped me go from feeling panicked and violated to calm and supported. Her knowledge, professionalism, and empathy were truly exemplary, and I want to make sure her efforts do not go unnoticed.
>
> Thank you for the excellent support your office provides.

In addition to receiving requests for help and information, the Office of the Public Advocate also engages in proactive education, including posting consumer guides and other resources to maine.gov/meopa, as well as publishing a newsletter emailed to hundreds of subscribers each month (sign up at maine.gov/meopa/subscribe).

Consumer Advisor Elizabeth Deprey receives a warm welcome at the Boothbay Community Center, where she spoke to local seniors about reducing their electricity bills.

Electric Ratepayer Advisory Council

The 18-member Electric Ratepayer Advisory Council (ERAC), created by statute in 2022, consists of 13 voting members representing customers and utilities across Maine, and five non-voting state officials. ERAC is charged with evaluating the affordability of electricity in Maine and advising the Public Advocate on potential improvements. The OPA provides staffing and funding for ERAC. The Public Advocate serves as the non-voting Chair of the Council. June 30, 2025 marked the conclusion of the first 3-year Council term. In July, ERAC began its second term with a strong mix of new and returning members. The State owes a great debt of gratitude to the public members of the Council who give generously of their time.

In December 2025, ERAC submitted its Fourth Annual Report to the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology. In addition to making significant progress on ten of the recommendations from prior reports, ERAC's report outlined four priority areas for 2026.

Low-Income Assistance Program Reform

Advocating for improving funding and operation of LIAP has been an ongoing priority for ERAC. The past year has seen significant success in achieving ERAC's goals.

- The Public Utilities Commission initiated Docket No. 2025-00241, Amendments to Chapter 314, Statewide Low-Income Assistance Plan Proposed Rule, resulting in significant changes to LIAP administration—including the transition from a lump-sum benefit to a monthly percentage discount program;
- In that same order, PUC increased ratepayer funding to $40.5 million for the Program Year beginning in October 2026;
- SupportLink is anticipated to greatly increase enrollment in LIAP by enabling data-sharing by the Department of Health and Human Services and the utilities on a quarterly basis to facilitate automatic enrollment of SNAP, TANF, and MaineCare recipients in LIAP, unless they opt out of data-sharing; and
- The Maine Legislature included $7.5 million in baseline funding for LIAP in the 2026-27 budget.

ERAC celebrates these milestones and knows that there is more work to be done to ensure that funding for LIAP achieves the amount needed to ensure that all Mainers pay no more than 4% of their household income for electricity.

Competitive Electricity Supply

Emergency legislation, LD 860, "An Act to Allow the Public Advocate to Obtain Information from Public Utilities, Competitive Electricity Providers and Standard-offer Service Providers," was enacted in 2025. CMP and Versant provided the Office of the Public

Advocate with confidential, town-level data needed to analyze Maine's retail electricity supply market. In January, the OPA presented a report on behalf of ERAC to the Energy, Utilities and Technology committee. The results of the analysis show that consumers who purchase supply from competitive suppliers generally pay more than they would have paid under the standard offer. In fact, the total excess payment to competitive suppliers over the nine-year period under analysis (2016 – 2024) is more than $156 million. The data analysis revealed that customers participating in LIAP are a growing portion of the competitive suppliers' business and often pay a higher premium than customers who do not participate in LIAP. This was a critical finding given the upcoming change to LIAP administration from a lump sum payment to a discount off a customer's bill.

As a result of this report, the EUT committee submitted legislation which passed with a significant bipartisan majority. LD 2203, "An Act to Limit Rates Charged to Low-income Electricity Consumers," requires any ratepayer enrolled in LIAP to pay no more than the standard offer for electricity supply. This change stretches the available LIAP funds to help as many families as possible.

Soliciting Input Directly from Ratepayers

ERAC is interested in hearing from low- and middle-income ratepayers to better understand their experiences, identify gaps in the current system, and inform future policy efforts to improve electricity affordability. Prior to conducting any new focus group or survey, the Council is investigating recent studies by organizations in Maine which included focus groups that had been asked questions relevant to energy affordability. To avoid duplication, ERAC will establish which questions have already been asked and answered and then determine what new information should be gathered.

Mitigation of Arrearages During Disconnection Moratoria

Some residential customers develop large arrearages during the annual winter disconnection moratorium, a problem that could be compounded if the State has future disconnection moratoria due to heat emergencies. ERAC began work to study how to mitigate the development of large arrearages during disconnection moratoria. Some of the areas of inquiry include:

- Quantification of arrearages developing during disconnection moratorium periods at both IOUs and COUs in Maine over the past 3-5 years;
- Characterization of the demographics of customers who develop arrearages during these periods.
- Investigation of the extent to which this is an issue in other states with extreme weather, and how they have addressed it.

If you would like more information regarding the Council or access to the Council materials, please visit our website.

Nonwires Alternatives

The Nonwires Alternative (NWA) initiative began in 2019, when the Legislature enacted PL 2019, Chapter 298 (LD 1181, "An Act to Reduce Electricity Costs through Non-wires Alternatives"). As a result, the NWA Coordinator (NWAC) performs a detailed technical review of CMP's and Versant's Annual Planning Studies to identify which projects are most likely to support an NWA at a lower cost for ratepayers. Maine law requires the Public Utilities Commission to consider NWAC recommendations before approving utility investments for significant transmission and distribution projects. Detailed cost information on specific projects is not publicly available due to confidentiality restrictions. Many of these reviews result in consensus plans that reduce utility spending and the resulting rate impact on consumers. If the stakeholders do not reach agreement, parties file their positions before the Commission for resolution.

The NWA initiative continues to add transparency and accountability to the Public Utilities Commission review process for utility infrastructure investments. In early 2026, Central Maine Power challenged the PUC's implementation of legislation enacted to add substations and other subtransmission components to the NWA review process (Docket No. 2025-00276). CMP argued that the 2023 legislation created a new and lower standard of review for many of the elements contained in Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (CPCN) proceedings. Specifically, CMP argued that CMP's proposed new Bayside Substation in Portland's East End, the expansion of the Raven Farm and East Deering Substations, and the 34.5 kV transmission line rebuilds and reroutes would not be subject to the existing standard of review in 35-A M.R.S. § 3132, which states:

> In determining public need, the commission shall, at a minimum, take into account economics, reliability, public health and safety, scenic, historic and recreational values, state renewable energy generation goals, the proximity of the proposed transmission line to inhabited dwellings and nonwires alternatives to construction of the transmission line, including energy conservation, distributed generation or load management.

Without this language, the review would be reduced to a review of the "need" for the project (See 35-A MRS § 3132-A).

The OPA argued that if CMP's mistaken interpretation of sections 3132 and 3132-A was adopted, it would "reduce the authority of the Commission over utility infrastructure projects," and thereby, the public's ability to weigh in on the impact of such projects. The OPA stated the legislative intent of the 2023 Amendments was to strengthen, not weaken, Commission oversight of such investments. The plain language of section 3132-A, as amended by the 2023 Amendments, does not show any intention to repeal or reduce the Commission's authority over utility infrastructure investments under section 3132.

The Commission accepted the OPA's arguments, finding that:

> As the OPA points out, CMP's interpretation, that only the two 115 kV transmission line components, are subject to CPCN analysis would be a significant reduction in the Commission's authority in reviewing these large-scale transmission line projects that can have significant impacts on the public... CMP's interpretation that all components of the Phase 1 project, with the exception of the two 115 kV line components, are no longer subject to this review and analysis would lead to an absurd, illogical, and inconsistent result.

The NWAC screened four CMP projects between July 1, 2025 and June 30, 2026:

- Biddeford-Saco Local Area Study
- Carmel-Detroit-Guilford Local Area Study
- Hartland Solar Interconnection Study
- Portland Transmission Area Study (reopened in 2025)

In addition, the NWAC conducted preliminary reviews of projects identified in CMP's and Versant's Annual Planning Studies. The NWAC also participated in regulatory proceedings related to the Carmel-Detroit-Guilford Local Area Study, the Portland Transmission Area Study, and the Larrabee Road Breaker Replacement Project.

For all reviews, the NWAC works with the utility and Efficiency Maine Trust to determine whether the needs that led to the proposed transmission, distribution, or substation project could be met cost-effectively using NWAs. The NWAC provides an objective electrical engineering overview of utility data underlying the need for each project. In this year's reviews, cost-effective NWAs were not available due to a combination of asset condition replacements, customer funded interconnections, and the higher cost of alternatives to meet the need.

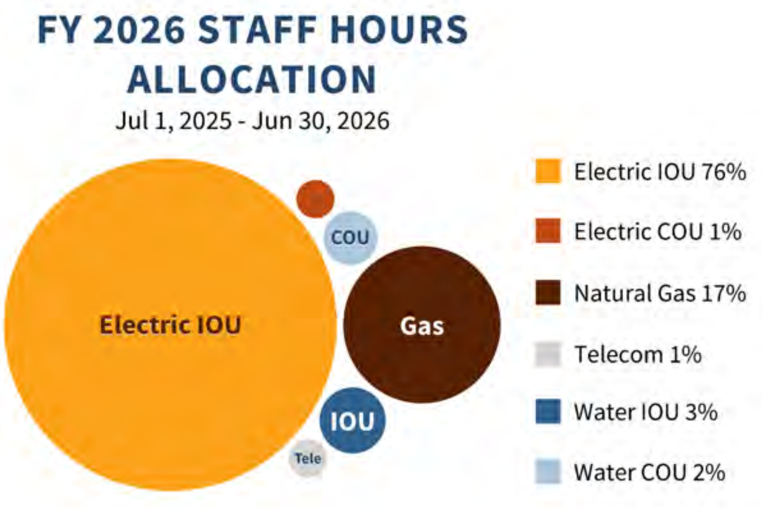
The Commission has initiated an inquiry into potential reforms and improvements to the Nonwires Alternatives process. OPA believes that earlier involvement of the NWA Coordinator in utility system studies would assist in finding alternatives. The OPA expects to work with stakeholders through the inquiry process to implement positive changes in the NWA review process to capture more NWA options going forward.


Boothbay Harbor

OPA Consultant Expenditures & Resource Allocation

Throughout the year, all staff members in the OPA track their time according to subject matter. Similarly, our consulting contract expenses are tracked by subject. We also track time and expenses by separating investor-owned utilities (IOUs) and consumer-owned utilities (COUs).

This resource allocation data determines the apportionment of the annual assessment on Maine's utilities that funds the OPA's approved FY26 budget of $3,497,987 for regulatory activities.



The OPA staff includes six attorneys and one economic analyst. This means that we must rely on outside expertise to assist with many of our cases. The chart below displays the OPA's consultant expenditures from July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2026.

FY 2026 Resource Allocation

Utility Type	Portion of OPA Resources	OPA Expenses per Dollar of Utility Revenue
Electric – IOU	76%	$0.003180446
Electric – COU	1%	$0.001112373
Natural Gas	17%	$0.002215315
Telecom	1%	$0.000168511
Water – IOU	3%	$0.002741766
Water – COU	2%	$0.000335543

About the Cover

The FY 2026 OPA Annual Report cover was inspired by many influences. The initial inspiration was how transmission towers kind of look like the Eiffel Tower.

The illustration became a way to highlight a new perspective that people typically do not see when looking at utility infrastructure.

The concept was also a play on Paris, Maine, and the state's propensity for naming towns after various foreign locations such as China, Denmark, or Peru.

Finally, the graphic style itself is modeled on 1920s travel posters and national park posters along with the work of 1930s designer A.M. Cassandre.

-Kaiden Kelley, Communications Intern

Photographs throughout this report were taken by OPA employees during their travels around Maine.