

Hughes to Propose Utility Customer Bill of Rights



Connecticut House Democrats Anne Hughes and Raghib Allie-Brennan Call for EverSource and United Illuminating Accountability and Propose Utility Customer Bill of Rights

Connecticut State Representatives Anne Hughes (D-135) and Raghib Allie-Brennan (D-2) today announced they will introduce legislation to hold public utilities EverSource and United Illuminating accountable for developing a more secure energy distribution grid, better outage communications plans, provide outage-related refunds, and limit executive compensation at the state's power companies.

This action comes in light of recent surprise rate hikes and massive power outages after Tropical Storm Isaias left nearly 700,000 Connecticut residents without power, some for as long as long as nine days.

"It's unacceptable that hundreds of thousands of residents spent days without power because Eversource and United Illuminating were unprepared for a completely

foreseeable storm event,” Hughes said. “Connecticut utility customers deserve a resilient, accountable power grid they can trust.

“Sadly, legislation that would have mitigated the Isaias disaster was rejected by Republicans, including my opponent, when it came before them in 2012. It’s time we revisit legislation that would protect consumers from the shocking lack of preparedness we saw at EverSource and United Illuminating before another major storm arrives.”

The 2012 legislation, An Act Concerning Consumer Protection for Utility Customers, would have limited the amount of executive compensation that could be funded by ratepayer dollars. According to published reports, Eversource’s five highest-paid employees earned a combined total of just over \$40 million in 2019. Eversource CEO Jim Judge earned more than \$19.8 million last year.

Additionally, under the 2012 bill, many customers would have been reimbursed by Eversource for spoiled food and prescriptions due to an extended power outage. Customers would have also been eligible for rate-relief due to a long blackout.

“My opponent needs to explain to consumers in Redding, Easton, and Weston who suffered real hardship as a result of this blackout why he did not support consumer protections for utility customers when he had the chance,” said Hughes. “I hope we can enact this major piece of pro-consumer legislation during the Special Legislative Session that has been discussed for September so that consumers can expect more accountability as we head into the heart of hurricane season.”

Hughes added, “We can’t afford to act like it’s 2012. It’s 2020: and we’re smack in the middle of hurricane and accountability season: the public knows it, and we know it. That’s why we’re doing something about it now.”

Photo at top: State Rep. Anne Hughes, D-135th, Easton, Redding, Weston. — Sarah Lehberger Photo