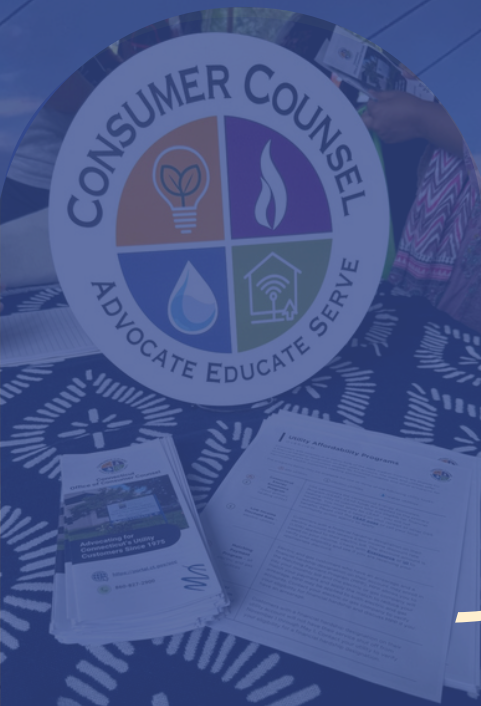




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OCC NEWSLETTER

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50th

ANNIVERSARY



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Message from the Consumer Counsel



As we move forward into 2026, calls for energy affordability across the nation and here in Connecticut have grown louder—appropriately so, given how difficult it has been for so many Connecticut households to keep up with rising energy, water, and communications costs, while also facing higher prices for food, housing, and health care.

Yet the recent federal policy landscape surrounding our efforts to achieve a reliable, cost-effective regional power grid and energy market have been counterproductive to our efforts to achieve energy affordability. The multiple attempts by the current administration to suspend work on the New London Revolution Wind project in its final stages of completion is a clear example. As I explained in a recent [Opinion piece](#), Connecticut consumers will be the ones who will take the financial hit if forced to pay to replace this critical power source. I am relieved that courts continue to overturn these senseless and illegal attempts to prevent these projects from coming online. I am hopeful that ratepayers will see the full benefit of the wind generating facility needed to cost-effectively meet Connecticut's growing demand for power. Throughout this period, OCC has strengthened its regional and federal advocacy to help bring the voice of the Connecticut consumer to important decision-making happening through our regional transmission organization ISO-NE and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, like energy market design, transmission and energy infrastructure

investments. While many of these decisions are made outside our state boundaries, they hit the electric bills of Connecticut residents, which is why OCC is ensuring we have a seat at the table.

OCC continues to support utility customers at the state level as well. When threats to federal LIHEAP funding placed additional uncertainty on the very programs designed to help our most vulnerable keep the heat on during the winter months – in my role as Consumer Counsel and as Chair of the Low-Income Energy and Water Advisory Board (LIEWAB) – we worked with state leaders to ensure state assistance dollars would be available as a backstop for the loss of federal funding. We are proud that Connecticut met the moment, and relieved that federal LIHEAP money came through for now, but we remain vigilant and ready to fight for this critical program's future.

Here in New Britain, my team and I are busy reasserting our pro-consumer positions in multiple rate cases where, as a result of court and PURA decisions, utility companies are getting another bite at the apple to increase their revenues at the expense of their customers. Despite the heavy and one-sided PR campaign still being waged by Eversource and Avangrid regarding regulatory decision-making, rates must be set by evidence, not indignation. OCC will continue to work hard on behalf of consumers to make sure PURA commissioners have all the evidence to make informed decisions.

In the midst of these challenges, we also marked a meaningful milestone: OCC's 50th anniversary. For five decades, this office has given Connecticut consumers a strong, independent voice in proceedings that are often dominated by well-resourced corporate interests. That mission feels more urgent today than ever.

Our team has been fully engaged on every front, advocating for fair utility rates, pushing for transparency, protecting access to assistance programs, and ensuring that long-term infrastructure decisions are made with the public interest in mind. We have also engaged in two significant change of control proceedings on the telecom side of our work, raising important questions about competition, service quality, and what consolidation in the communications market means for consumer choice and affordable cable service.

We know the pressures households are facing, and we take seriously our responsibility to fight for affordability, accountability, and fairness in virtually every docket before our state regulator.

Thank you for staying engaged in our collective efforts to stand up for consumers and to improve our regulatory framework in a manner that truly serves the people of Connecticut.

Best,

Claire Coleman



Consumer Information Corner



Electric Bill Changes: Supply Rates

United Illuminating and Eversource Customers Will Pay Higher Standard Service Supply Rates Effective January 1, 2026.

Customers of Eversource and United Illuminating using an average of 700 kWh per month may see a monthly electric bill increase by approximately \$20 and \$14 a month, respectively. This is possible due to an increase in the **Standard Service supply rate** of roughly **10% for Eversource** and **17% for United Illuminating** customers.

The current Standard Service rate for **Eversource customers** is **12.64 ¢ per kWh**, while **United Illuminating customers** are currently paying **13.695 ¢ per kWh**. Prior to January 1, 2026, Eversource customers were paying 9.748 ¢ per kWh while United Illuminating customers were paying 11.6841 ¢ per kWh.

All impacted Eversource and United Illuminating customers will be charged these new rates, which can be found under the **Supply category** on their electric bill, multiplied by their monthly usage as measured by their electric meter in kilowatt hours. **This new rate will be in effect from January 1, 2026 through June 30, 2026.**

The Office of Consumer Counsel **urges consumers to continue to make every effort to reduce bills through energy conservation and efficiency measures.** For more information on reducing your usage and on opportunities for energy efficiency and clean energy improvements, please visit [EnergizeCT.com](https://www.energizect.com). For more information on this rate change, see OCC's consumer alert [here](#).



What is standard service?

Standard service is the price Eversource and United Illuminating pay for the electricity **generated** by other energy suppliers for you to use.

Connecticut customers have two choices for their electricity supply: (1) standard service, which is contracted through our electric distribution companies (Eversource and UI) and requires no additional steps, or (2) entering a contract with a third-party supplier.

Third-Party Suppliers

Some customers may choose to opt out of standard service and instead enter into a contract with a third-party supplier. If you want to learn more about third-party suppliers, check out OCC's tips on the next page! Or visit our [FAQ](#).



Third-Party Electric Suppliers

Your electric bill is divided into four parts: Supply, Local Delivery, Transmission, and Public Benefits. The **Supply** portion of your bill reflects the cost of the generation of electricity, which is deregulated, meaning that customers can get their electricity supply through the utility's standard service rate or enroll with a third-party supplier. If you enroll with a supplier, you will still receive your bill from your utility and enrolling with a third-party supplier affects only the Supply portion of your bill.

How do I enroll with a supplier?

- Always use [EnergizeCT.com](https://www.energizect.com) when enrolling with a supplier. Do not enroll with a supplier based on a call, mailer, email, online advertisement, or social media link. EnergizeCT.com shows the current utility standard service rate and compares all publicly available electric supplier rates so you can ensure you are receiving the best rate.
- Always enter [EnergizeCT.com](https://www.energizect.com) directly into your browser URL or follow or bookmark the links provided. Entering terms like "Energize CT" into a search engine sometimes produces sponsored websites before linking you to EnergizeCT.com. These sponsored websites are often affiliated with individual suppliers and do not display all available rates.
- When using [EnergizeCT.com](https://www.energizect.com), you may click on the supplier rate in which you want to enroll, follow the link to the supplier's website, and follow the steps to enroll. For some rates you may also call the telephone number listed on the rate, however, suppliers are not required to enroll via the phone and some suppliers will enroll only online.

THIRD-PARTY ELECTRIC SUPPLIERS JANUARY 2026 COMPARISON CHART	
Eversource - 12.64 cents/kWh	United Illuminating - 13.69 cents/kWh
Direct Energy - 12.39 cents/kWh for 10 billing cycles	Direct Energy - 12.69 cents/kWh for 10 billing cycles
	Major Energy - 12.99 cents/kWh for 12 billing cycles
	North American Power - 13.29 cents/kWh for 12 billing cycles
	North American Power - 13.49 cents/kWh for 10 billing cycles

FAQs

How do I enroll with a supplier?

How can I tell if I am getting a good price?

Does switching to a supplier mean that I will no longer be an Eversource or UI customer?

What if I change my mind or realize that I am paying my supplier too much?

How do I switch back to standard service?

How do I switch to another supplier?

Can I negotiate the price with my current supplier?

To learn more, visit our FAQ at [tinyurl.com/OCC-supplier-faq](https://www.tinyurl.com/OCC-supplier-faq)



Watch this and other OCC videos on our Youtube page (or click the thumbnail!)



Understanding Connecticut’s Regulated Utility Monopolies

Ever wonder why there are only two main electric and gas companies in Connecticut and who decides what they can charge? To answer those questions, check out OCC’s latest video that helps break down the basics.

In this video, we explore what monopolies are, why they exist and why they’re so common in essential public services like electricity, gas, and water. Unlike choosing where to eat dinner, consumers don’t get to shop around for a utility provider. These services are considered monopolies because it’s impractical and costly to build multiple sets of wires, pipes, and infrastructure to every home and business.

In Connecticut, while customers interact with local distribution companies, those companies are ultimately part of much larger corporate structures. **Eversource**, as a parent company, owns **Yankee Gas Services Company**, **Aquarion Water Company**, and after acquiring Connecticut Light and Power Company in 2015, delivers electric service through **Eversource Energy**. **Avangrid**, the parent company of **United Illuminating**, **Connecticut Natural Gas** and **Southern Connecticut Natural Gas**, is majority-owned by Iberdrola, a multi-national energy company headquartered in Spain.

Monopolies, however, come with risks for consumers. Without competition, companies can become price setters, leaving consumers with no choice but to accept the price, especially when the service is essential. That’s why regulation matters.

This video explains how utility monopolies are allowed to exist in exchange for strict oversight, including how rates are regulated in Connecticut by the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA). It also introduces the basic utility regulatory and legal principle that utilities recover their costs for providing service and earn a reasonable return.

This is the first step in understanding how our utility systems work. OCC understands consumers, elected officials, and stakeholders are seeking more information about how utility regulation works and are also concerned about affordability. Keep reading for a comprehensive list of utility assistance programs and available bill help!



Help Paying Your Bill

Electric Bill

There are a number of ways customers can receive help to make their electric bill more affordable:

- Please visit Connecticut's [Energy Assistance](#) website to see if you qualify for CEAP and apply online. CEAP expects to provide between \$295-\$645 of direct funds for energy assistance to each customer for the 2025-2026 season.
- Customers who receive any benefit from DSS (such as SNAP or Husky) should have a discount rate automatically applied to their electric bill. If you do not see a discount applied to your electric bill, call [Eversource](#) (1-800-286-2828) or [UI](#) (1-800-722-5584). They will guide you through submitting evidence of your DSS benefit to them.
- Customers who do not receive a DSS benefit should call Eversource (1-800-286-2828) or UI (1-800-722-5584). They will ask you income prequalification questions to determine if you are income-eligible for a financial hardship designation.
- If you are not income-eligible for a discount rate, you may still be able to participate in a flexible payment arrangement if you have an outstanding balance. A flexible payment arrangement allows you to pay off your outstanding balance over 18 months, interest free, by paying your current bill plus 1/18th of your outstanding balance.
- [Generation Power CT](#) (formerly known as Operation Fuel) also offers assistance grants to income-eligible customers and customers can apply online. More customers are eligible for Generation Power CT assistance than are eligible for CEAP because Generation Power CT's income limits are higher.



The utility will ask you questions regarding your income. If you are income eligible, you may participate in the Matching Payment Program (MPP). In MPP, a customer pays their usual monthly bill, and the utility matches the amount paid and applies the match to the customer's outstanding balance. For example, if you owe \$500 in outstanding balance and your monthly bill is \$100, each month when you pay your \$100 bill, the utility will match that payment and will reduce your \$500 outstanding balance by \$100. At the end of five months, you would have paid off your outstanding balance simply by paying your monthly utility bill.

Customers who are not income-eligible still may pay off their outstanding balance interest free. Any residential customer may enroll on a flexible payment arrangement (FPA). The FPA will allow you to pay off your outstanding balance over 18 months, paying 1/18th of the balance in addition to your monthly payment.

Customers actively participating in any payment arrangement cannot be shut off. The important first step is to call the utility and find out which payment arrangement is right for you.

If you have an outstanding balance on your electric gas utility account, there is help available. The first step is to call your utility at one of the numbers listed on the next page.

Contact your utility



[Eversource and
Yankee Gas](#)



1-800-286-2828 (electric)

1-800-438-2278 (gas)

[United Illuminating](#)

1-800-722-5584

[Connecticut Natural Gas](#)

860-524-8361

[Southern Connecticut Gas](#)

1-800-659-8299

[Connecticut Water](#)

1-800-286-5700

[Aquarion Water](#)

1-800-732-9678


Utility Affordability Programs

OVERVIEW



Customers with incomes at or below 60% of the state median income are eligible for a financial hardship designation on their utility account. The state and utilities offer several programs for customers eligible for financial hardship and other programs for non-income eligible customers needing assistance.

The programs below may be available for one or more of the following utility types:

 gas utilities

 electric utilities

 water utilities



Connecticut Energy Assistance Program

(your primary heating utility)

DSS administers the Connecticut Energy Assistance Program (CEAP). CEAP funds are applied to the primary heating utility of customers who are eligible for financial hardship. You must apply for CEAP – you will not automatically receive it based on your receipt of other DSS benefits. Please visit the [CEAP page](#) or call your local community action agency to apply.



Low Income Discount Rate – electric utilities














Customers with a financial hardship designation on their electric account will automatically receive a low income discount rate (LIDR) applied to their electric bill. The discount amount is based on your income. Check with [Eversource](#) or [UI](#) to verify your eligibility and see if you are receiving your appropriate discount.



Matching Payment Program – all electric and gas utilities

Electric and gas customers who have an arrearage and a financial hardship designation on their account may enroll in the Matching Payment Program (MPP). MPP allows you to pay your monthly bill and the electric or gas company will match your payment and apply the match to reduce your arrearage. MPP may be applied to both electric and gas accounts. Contact your electric or gas company to verify your eligibility for financial hardship and discuss MPP if you have an arrearage.

Customers with a financial hardship designation and eligible arrearage will be automatically enrolled on MPP during two cycles each winter. If you are a hardship customer with an arrearage and are not enrolled on MPP, contact the utility.

  <p>Winter Moratorium Protection – all electric and gas utilities</p>	<p>Customers with a financial hardship designation on their utility account will not have their service shut off from November 1 through May 1. Contact your utility to verify your eligibility for a financial hardship designation.</p>
 <p>WRAP – Connecticut Water Company</p>	<p>Through the Water Rate Assistance Program (WRAP), income-eligible CT Water customers can qualify for a 10%, 40% or 80% reduction on their water bill. The discount varies based on household income. Customers will need to re-apply to confirm income eligibility every 12 months. Visit gpct.org/water or contact GPCT (860-243-2345) for more information.</p>
 <p>LIRAP – Aquarion</p>	<p>Through the Low-Income Rate Assistance Program (LIRAP), income-eligible Aquarion customers can qualify for a 15% discount on their monthly water bill for 12 months. LIRAP does not auto-renew, and customers must reapply every year. Customers should visit gpct.org/water or contact GPCT (860-243-2345) for more information and to apply.</p>
 <p>Grants/Vouchers – Connecticut Water Company, Aquarion</p>	<p>Income-eligible customers may apply for a voucher or grant for water assistance. For more information on eligibility and how to apply, visit gpct.org/water or contact GPCT (860-243-2345).</p>
   <p>Generation Power CT (formerly Operation Fuel)</p>	<p>GPCT offers grants to customers with incomes slightly higher than those qualifying for financial hardship. Customers should visit GPCT.org or call 860-243-2345 for more information.</p>
   <p>Flexible Payment Arrangements – electric and gas utilities, Aquarion & Connecticut Water</p>	<p>Utilities offer flexible payment arrangements to any customer, regardless of income, if the customer has an arrearage. Contact your utility to learn more about payment plan options.</p>
  <p>Medical Protection – all electric and gas utilities</p>	<p>Customers whose medical provider verifies that they have a serious or life-threatening illness may have their account protected from shut off during the winter moratorium (for serious illness designation) or for up to one year (life-threatening designation).</p>



OCC Key Issues

KEY RATE PROCEEDINGS BEFORE PURA

UNITED ILLUMINATING COMPANY RATE CASE

In November 2024, **United Illuminating Company**, an electric distribution company owned by Iberdrola, filed an application with PURA **seeking a \$109 million rate increase**, to be collected from customers in a single year. OCC investigated the proposal, filed 886 interrogatories, cross examined company witnesses over nine full day hearings, and elevated customer voices throughout the proceedings.

Through this work, OCC identified multiple concerns, including proposed profit increases of 64%, employee bonuses awarded for higher spending, improper use of ratepayer funds for the English Station cleanup, and additional costs that should not have been charged to consumers.

PURA **approved an increase of over \$65 million** – an over \$40 million reduction to the company’s original request – **resulting in an average residential bill increase of about \$13 more per month**. While not all of OCC’s cost reductions were reflected in the final decision, the outcome reflected our meaningful scrutiny of UI’s proposal.

These changes are not yet effective in rates due to United Illuminating’s recent action in filing a petition for reconsideration. PURA reopened the record to reconsider the following elements of the decision: ROE penalty related to UI’s failure to comply with English Station remediation orders, ROE penalties related to noncompliance, and the disallowance of certain Operations and Maintenance (O&M) expense to be recovered through rates. OCC opposed this request. Our brief can be found [here](#).

OCC will continue to represent the interests of UI’s customers during the remainder of this proceeding.

YANKEE GAS COMPANY RATE CASE

In October 2024, **Yankee Gas Company**, a natural gas distribution company owned by Eversource, filed an application with PURA **seeking a \$209 million rate increase**, the largest gas delivery rate ever proposed in Connecticut. The request would have driven a **43% increase** in gas distribution rates, adding roughly **\$47 per month** to the average residential customer monthly bill.

OCC issued 554 interrogatories and cross-examined company witnesses over ten hearing days challenging the scale of the request and identifying multiple areas of inappropriate use of ratepayer funds.

PURA approved an **increase of approximately \$82 million** – less than half of Yankee’s request – and ordered a reduction to the company’s return on equity. OCC estimates this will result in an **increase of about \$17-\$20** to the average residential customer’s monthly bill. While the outcome is more generous than OCC’s recommendations, Yankee Gas also filed a petition for reconsideration with PURA.

PURA reopened the record to reconsider a limited set of issues, so OCC will continue to represent the interests of Yankee’s customers during the remainder of this proceeding.

REGIONAL AND FEDERAL EFFORTS



Transmission Infrastructure and Cost Containment

Regional transmission infrastructure spending and interconnection policies, coordinated by ISO New England and overseen by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), represent an important component of rising consumer bills. Several systemic factors continue to drive costs higher, and we continue to engage actively in regional and federal forums to push for reforms that protect consumers.

Smarter Load Forecasting

Accurate forecasts are critical because they determine how much generation and transmission customers are required to pay for. Overestimating peak demand can lead to unnecessary investments and higher bills. We are advocating for forecasting methods that reflect realistic adoption of new grid enhancing technologies, recognize the potential for demand flexibility, and use more granular, location-specific data so customers are not paying for capacity and infrastructure they do not need or will not use.

Transmission costs in New England are among the highest in the nation and continue to rise, driven largely by expensive repair and replacement projects on existing infrastructure. We are supporting stronger oversight of these projects, guarding against costly repairs or bloated budgets, and more rigorous review of whether projects are appropriately sized and truly necessary. We also support competitive bidding for major new transmission projects to ensure consumers benefit from market discipline rather than automatic awards to incumbent utilities.

Controlling Transmission Cost Growth

Fair Cost Allocation for New Growth

Large new loads, such as data centers and other high-demand facilities, can drive the need for costly transmission and system upgrades. We are urging regulators to apply clear cost-causation principles so that entities driving new infrastructure needs bear an appropriate share of the costs, rather than broadly socializing those expenses across all ratepayers.

Long waits and rising upgrade costs for connecting new generation and storage projects increase developer risk and financing costs, which ultimately show up in higher prices for consumers through energy contracts and capacity markets. We are advocating for faster, more predictable interconnection processes and clearer rules on who pays for network upgrades, particularly when upgrades are driven by large load growth.

Fixing Interconnection Delays that Raise Long-Term Costs

Across all of these areas, our focus remains on practical reforms that improve reliability while keeping affordability front and center. We continue to engage with regional operators and federal regulators to promote best practices that limit unnecessary spending, strengthen oversight, and ensure that infrastructure investments deliver real value to consumers.



ABOUT THE OCC

The Office of Consumer Counsel (OCC) is an independent state agency with statutory responsibility to represent customers of Connecticut's regulated utilities – electric, gas, water, and telecommunications providers – primarily in matters that go before the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA).

OCC is authorized to participate on behalf of consumer interests in all administrative and judicial forums and in any matters in which the interests of consumers with respect to public utility matters may be involved.

OCC's core mission is to advance the interests of Connecticut's utility customers with a goal of achieving affordable, reliable, and sustainable energy services and improving utility company performance to best meet the needs of consumers. This includes cost-effectively achieving the state's clean energy targets, environmental and greenhouse gas reduction goals, and environmental justice and equity priorities. OCC is also committed to achieving universal access to high-speed affordable broadband connections for all its residents. We help improve Connecticut residents' access to essential services that are critical to the health, safety, and economic well-being of our state.

The Office consists of attorneys, accountants, financial and research analysts, communications and support staff. Together, OCC pursues its core mission through strategic litigation, policy development, research and data analysis, and engagement with regulators and policymakers, the legislature, the public, and other key stakeholders.