



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
General Court

January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2023

Matthew H. Nelson, Chair  
Department of Public Utilities  
One South Station, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Boston, MA 02110

**RE: Winter Energy Rate Increases**

Dear Chair Nelson,

Several months ago, you received a letter from many of our colleagues regarding our deep concerns about the proposed energy rate increases from multiple investor-owned utility companies, including National Grid, Unitil and Eversource. We expressed concerns about the exorbitant rate increases which were being requested as they would cause great harm to our constituents and local business.

Utility companies cited a myriad of factors that contributed to their request to raise their rates. The focus however for the requested increase centered around the high price of oil and Russia's invasion of Ukraine as well as rising inflation. In the summer of 2022 oil prices reached exorbitant levels, peaking at over \$140 per barrel. However, since the time the department of Public Utilities (DPU) approved the utilities' requested rate increases, oil prices have fallen dramatically, trading at \$75 per barrel at the close of the day on January 4, 2023.<sup>1</sup>

We are requesting that the DPU take immediate action to reassess the recently granted rate increases. With cheaper oil, utility companies have been able to generate extreme profit for themselves at the expense of Massachusetts residents. It is the DPU's duty to protect our citizens from unfair and deeply damaging prices.<sup>2</sup>

Several winter months remain, and it is untenable for our residents and businesses to continue to pay these outrageous and unfair prices for the benefit of utility investors. We urge you to prioritize safety, affordability, and equity for residents across the Commonwealth. Inaction from the DPU on this matter is unacceptable, and we hope you will take the immediate action necessary to protect our residents.

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<sup>1</sup> See also Gas and oil prices sink on back of warm weather and economic worries, Financial Times (January 4<sup>th</sup>, 2023) available at: <https://www.ft.com/content/c12ba784-4afa-4685-af75-6135b95da923>

<sup>2</sup> According to the Mass General Laws, "[DPU] shall, with respect to itself and the entities it regulates, prioritize safety, security, reliability of service, affordability, equity and reductions in greenhouse gas emissions...." M.G.L. 25, § 1A.

We look forward to your response as matter must be addressed immediately. Thank you for your attention to this request.

Sincerely,

**Representative John Barrett, III**  
First Berkshire District

**Senator Paul Mark**  
Berkshire, Hampden, Franklin and Hampshire District

**Representative Smitty Pignatelli**  
Third Berkshire District