

New Organization Aims to Lower Americans' Energy Bills By Modernizing Utility Regulation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Washington, D.C. – Today, [PowerLines](#) is announcing its launch as a national nonprofit organization focused on modernizing utility regulation to accelerate affordable, reliable, and clean energy for American energy consumers.

PowerLines will serve as a hub for modernizing utility regulation by bringing together diverse stakeholders to share resources, generate ideas, and implement solutions on a path forward to effective utility regulation. Founded by former Harvard researcher and U.S. Department of Energy advisor [Charles Hua](#), PowerLines has assembled a bipartisan advisory board of leading energy experts, scholars, policymakers, and regulators to advocate for consumer and community interests.

This announcement comes as the need for a modernized energy system is increasingly urgent to address mounting affordability and reliability challenges of an aging power grid. U.S. residential electricity rates have [increased 20% since the start of 2022](#), with [over 1 in 4 Americans](#) struggling to pay their energy bills. Additionally, weather-related power outages have [nearly doubled since 2011](#). These consequences disproportionately [harm](#) low-income communities and communities of color.

Meanwhile, U.S. peak electricity demand is forecasted to [grow 38 GW](#) over the next five years. This marks the fastest rate of growth in electricity demand in decades, driven by AI, manufacturing, and electrification. Regulators have a critical role in ensuring this energy infrastructure equitably improves affordability, reliability of service, sustainability, and public health outcomes.

Across the U.S., state public utilities commissions (PUCs) regulate the utilities that provide crucial services to the public including electricity, gas, water, and telecommunications. Approximately [200](#) individual commissioners oversee over [\\$200 billion](#) in utility spending each year. The decisions they make impact household electricity bills, utilities' investment decisions, the quality of utility service,

and where energy projects are located. Yet, despite the power these regulators hold, few people know who they are, what their jobs entail, or how to provide input on their decisions.

“Our energy system is facing an inflection point. The decisions made by state public utilities commissions over the next five years will determine whether the United States can build clean energy infrastructure at the speed and scale needed to meet rising demand for electricity, allow communities to equitably access the benefits of a modern energy system, and compete on a global economic stage. The public interest must be central to these conversations,” said Charles Hua, Founder and Executive Director of PowerLines.

The challenges facing the power system have also created unprecedented opportunities to center the public in public utilities commissions. Community engagement with PUCs has recently yielded positive outcomes for consumers, with Louisiana [approving a long-awaited energy efficiency measure](#) and the Colorado PUC [adopting a new framework to center equity](#) in PUC decision making. These decisions point towards a promising regulatory future that advances consumer interests, community benefits, and economic development. PowerLines will accelerate this modernization by galvanizing customers, communities, and companies to engage with state PUCs.

“We must act now to ensure that historically marginalized communities don't continue to suffer the consequences of an outdated and unjust energy system. I have deep confidence in the team that PowerLines has pulled together to advance a just energy future. PowerLines could not have come at a better time,” said Jacqui Patterson, Founder and Executive Director of The Chisholm Legacy Project and former Director of the NAACP Environmental and Climate Justice Program.

PowerLines seeks a modern utility regulatory system that revolves around three principles: smarter planning, better incentives, and greater consumer protection. PowerLines will work to enact these principles by engaging with the people, policies, and processes shaping our regulatory system.

“The laws that govern the electric power industry are rooted in out-of-date assumptions about technologies, business models, and policy priorities. PowerLines is a much-needed effort to modernize state utility regulation around widely shared goals,” said Ari Peskoe, Director of the Electricity Law Initiative at the Harvard Law School Environmental and Energy Law Program.

By promoting practical energy solutions, PowerLines is working towards a future where affordable, reliable, and clean energy contributes to healthy, vibrant, and safe communities across the U.S.

Learn more about PowerLines [here](#). Please reach out to contact@powerlines.org with additional inquiries and requests.

QUOTES

"Our energy system has persistently overburdened low-income communities and communities of color. We now have a once-in-a-generation opportunity for communities to reap environmental and economic benefits and experience affordable, reliable, and clean energy access. However, this will require a regulatory system that is held accountable for advancing a more equitable energy future. The visionary leadership of PowerLines is driven to tackle this critical challenge and will chart a new path forward to achieve energy justice." -**Dr. Tony G. Reames**, Professor at the University of Michigan and former Deputy Director for Energy Justice at the U.S. Department of Energy

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"As the energy transition continues to pick up pace, our energy regulatory system has the potential to better respond to the needs of communities that have been historically overlooked and undervalued. As a former public service commissioner, I'm thrilled to support PowerLines' work to advance this mission during this most critical time." -**Tremaine Phillips**, former Michigan Public Service Commissioner

"State public utility commissions play a crucial role in shaping the trajectory of energy innovation and technological change. Innovation is essential to ensuring a reliable, affordable, clean, and abundant energy future in robust communities. PowerLines is poised to be a valuable community focused on updating outdated procedures and enabling state commissions to achieve their consumer protection missions while facilitating innovation." -**Lynne Kiesling**, Director of Northwestern University Institute of Regulatory Law and Economics, External Faculty at Santa Fe Institute, Nonresident Senior Fellow at American Enterprise Institute

"Governance of the nation's electric power system is woefully inadequate to meet the demands of the 21st century, and pragmatic reform initiatives like PowerLines are urgently needed to address this challenge." -**Tyler Norris**, James B. Duke Fellow at Duke University