



UTILITY BILLS ARE RISING

Q1 2026

MAY 2026



An aerial photograph of a residential neighborhood. In the foreground, there are several houses with dark roofs and some green trees. A road with a white fence runs along the left side. In the middle ground, there are more houses and a large area of tall, dry grass. Several high-voltage power lines with metal towers stretch across the scene from the right towards the left. The background is filled with a dense forest of trees, some with autumn-colored leaves. The sky is overcast with grey clouds.

”

Utility consumers feel powerless over rising utility bills and don't trust their elected officials are looking out for their interests. Policymakers have a critical opportunity to bring real solutions that deliver meaningful results for skeptical voters.

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All photographs in this report were commissioned by PowerLines, with photographer credits included.

01

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Utilities continue to request significant rate hikes as energy consumers are increasingly concerned about rising utility bills and are left feeling powerless.



Utilities filed \$9.4 billion in rate increase requests in the first quarter of 2026 in a slate of proposals poised to impact more than 81 million customers across the U.S., according to a PowerLines analysis.

Nationwide polling of electric and gas utility bill payers conducted by Ipsos for PowerLines found more than 2 in 3 (68 percent) respondents reported their electric or gas bill has increased since last year.¹ More than 3 in 4 (77 percent) respondents are concerned their bills will continue to rise. By two measures—utility rate increases in the first quarter of 2026 and planned utility spending that could result in future rate increase requests—their concerns are justified.

Since 2021, electric rates have increased by nearly 40 percent nationwide. By 2025, increasing energy costs became a prominent issue in elections across the country, this frustration evident in exit polling and election outcomes. According to PowerLines' 2026 polling results, energy costs will remain a key political issue for the foreseeable future.

Three-quarters (76 percent) of Americans surveyed want their government officials to provide stronger oversight of utility companies. At the same time, acknowledging their limited understanding of the factors driving up utility bills, utility consumers² are skeptical that policy solutions can lower their energy

¹ Polling methodology can be found in the **Appendix** of this report.
² Throughout this report, PowerLines uses "Americans," "consumers," "bill payers," and "respondents" interchangeably.

Polling also found:



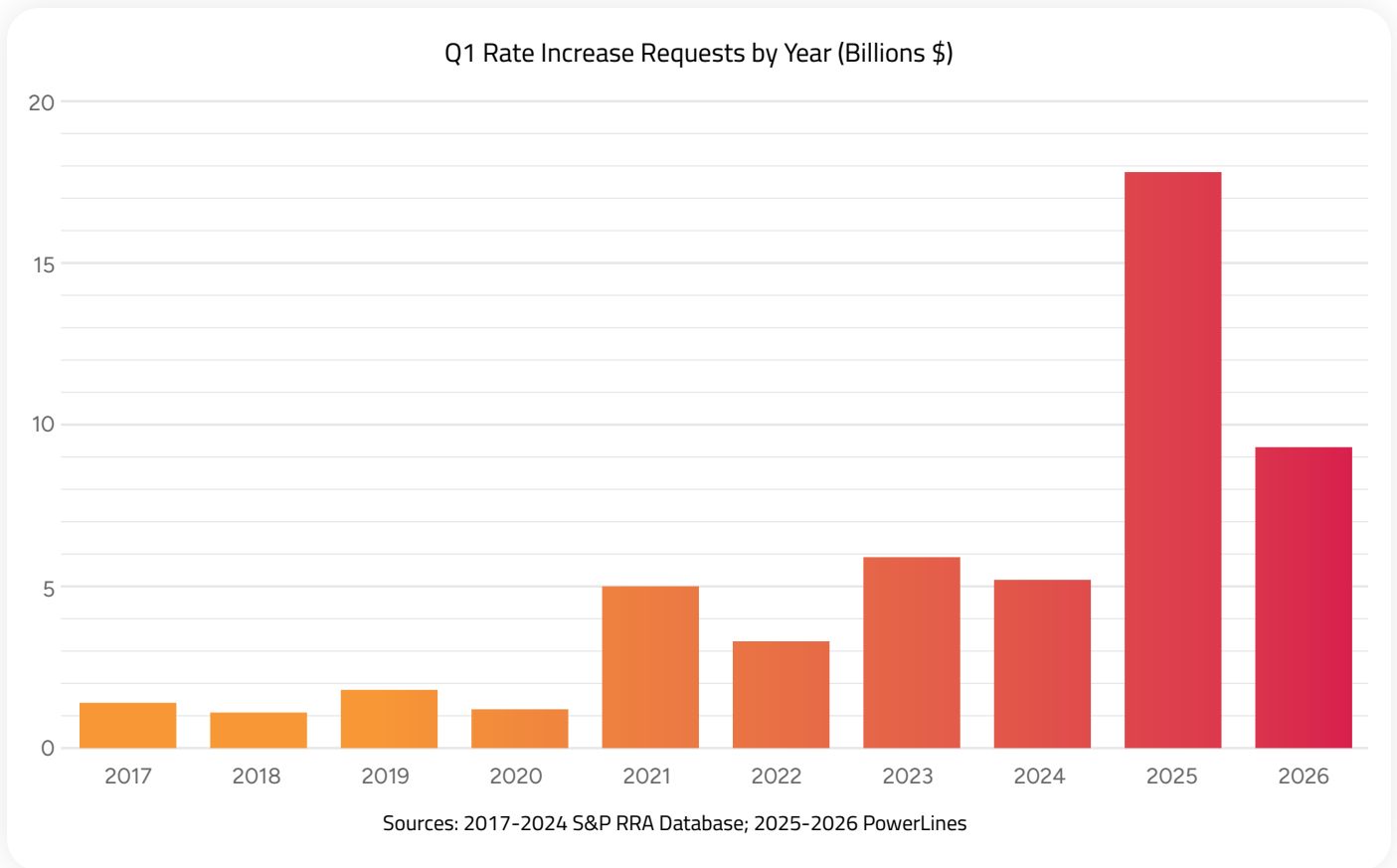
Americans feel their bills will rise no matter what their elected officials do.



utility bill payers think their utility company puts consumers' interests over their own.



utility bill payers think their utility company offers them the most affordable rates they can.



costs, with 64 percent of Americans believing utility bills will increase regardless of any action taken by elected officials. These findings suggest that elected officials have an opportunity to deliver meaningful results for skeptical voters.

Today, nearly 80 million Americans are struggling to pay their utility bills. And in 2024 alone, 13.5 million customers saw their utilities shut off.

The majority of Americans (61 percent) feel their utility bills add to their financial stress.



Today, nearly 80 million Americans are struggling to pay their utility bills. And in 2024 alone, 13.5 million customers saw their utilities shut off.

Utility customers are most frustrated by the unpredictability of bill prices from month to month, their lack of choice in energy providers, and a perceived lack of transparency about what is driving cost increases. Respondents across regions remain concerned about bill

increases, and want to see decisive action from elected officials to combat rising costs. Generally, these responses do not vary widely by party affiliation, demonstrating concern over rising utility bills transcends traditional partisan politics.

Utility consumers feel powerless over rising utility bills and don't trust their elected officials are looking out for their interests. Policymakers have a critical opportunity to bring real solutions that deliver meaningful results for skeptical voters.



74%

of respondents whose household income is more than \$100,000 are worried about their utility bills increasing, **highlighting a concerned middle class.**

ONLY 29%

of respondents agree with the statement that their state government “does a good job protecting their interests when it comes to regulating local electrical or gas utilities,” **a drop of nearly ten percentage points (38 percent) from last year.**

02

KEY RESULTS: **POLLING**

Consumers saw their bills rise again, and feel increasingly powerless to stop it.



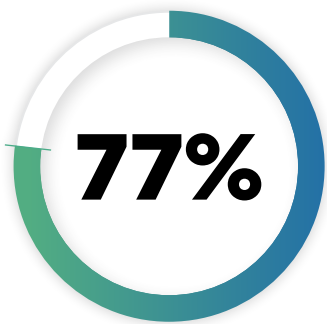
Nationwide, compared to last year, utility bill payers are reporting an increase in their electricity or gas bills, with 68 percent reporting an increase—4 percent more than last year—and just 3 percent of respondents reporting a drop in cost. Utility bill payers reported their average monthly utility bill is \$210 this year, up nearly \$20 since last year’s survey.

Meanwhile, the vast majority of bill payers (77 percent) are concerned their bills will rise again this year—4 percent more than last year—and four in five Americans (80 percent) believe they are powerless to control how much they are charged for gas or electric services.

The majority of respondents (61 percent) said their energy bills have added to their

financial stress, and another 52 percent say changes to their utility bills have impacted their spending habits. Low-income consumers have been particularly hard-hit, with nearly half of households making less than \$50,000 reporting it is difficult to budget their monthly gas and electricity bills—just under the 51 percent who report difficulty in budgeting groceries, and more than the 36 percent who find it difficult to budget for transportation costs.

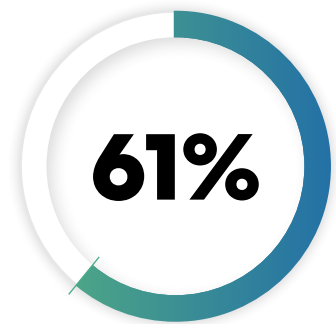
Consumers also tie rising utility bills to wider macroeconomic trends, with a majority (52 percent) believing an increase in energy bills is a bad sign for the economy, a jump from the 47 percent who believed this in last year’s polling.



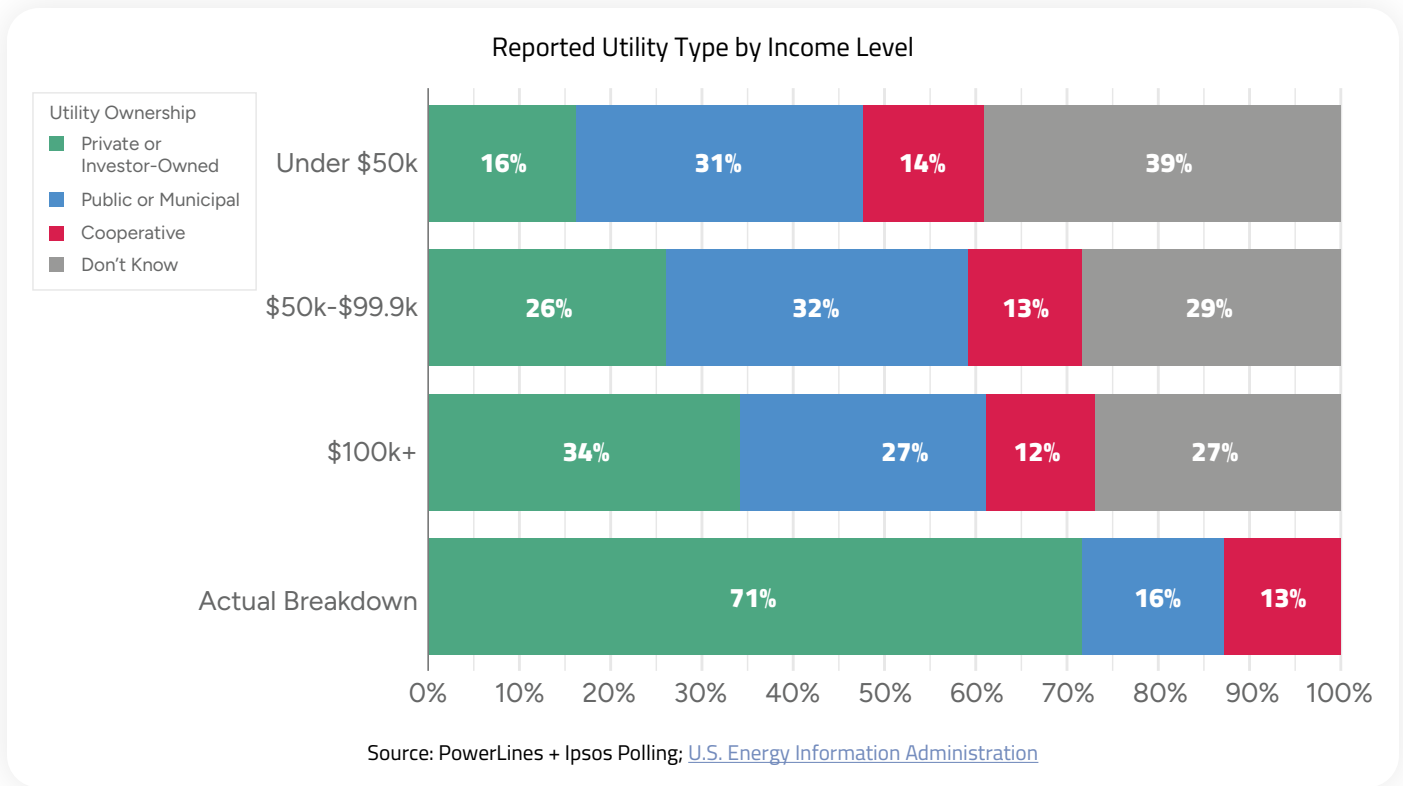
are concerned their bills will rise again this year



feel powerless to control how much they are charged for their utilities



say their energy bills have added to their financial stress



Americans feel in the dark about what’s driving their bill increases

Transparency remains a major issue for energy consumers. The majority of Americans (58 percent) do not fully understand what drives their monthly energy bills.

Fewer than half of utility bill payers believe the quality and reliability of service they receive from their energy company justifies the bills they pay, while just 41 percent believe their utility offers them ample opportunities to save costs. About a quarter of utility bill payers believe their utility is offering them the most affordable rate possible, while a mere 16

percent believe the company puts consumer interests over their own.

Younger respondents were slightly less likely to understand what components drive energy costs than counterparts 65 or older. Consumers also appear unsure about what kind of utility serves them. Utility bill payers were most likely to believe their utility is public (32 percent), which is more than double the ratio of Americans served by public power.³ Meanwhile, fewer than one-third of respondents said their utility was

³ Public power utilities are nonprofit power companies generally overseen by local or municipal governments.

investor-owned, despite those companies serving roughly 72 percent of U.S. consumers, and another 28 percent reported being unsure what kind of utility services their home.

Over one in four consumers don't feel their utility gives them the information they need to understand how much electricity they're using. But they have little confidence in elected officials or energy companies to provide reliable information about why their bills are rising. Respondents indicated they trust nonprofit advocacy organizations over their utility companies to accurately explain their power bills, with 53 percent reporting they trust the former and 43 percent trusting

the latter. Elected officials are less trusted to explain utility bills than energy companies, with federal officials being the least trusted (only 16 percent) and local officials the most trusted at 24 percent. This indicates policymakers have an opportunity to educate consumers about the critical role public officials can play and to build back consumer trust.

Consumers remain most frustrated by bill price changes from month to month and a lack of choice in their utility provider, with both grievances ranking as top concerns, at 39 percent. The second most common frustration is a lack of transparency around costs: 29 percent of respondents list that as a top concern.



Consumers want to see elected officials act to lower bills, and policymakers have ample opportunity to overcome low expectations

The majority of respondents want to see decisive action from their elected officials to fight rising energy costs. More than three-fourths want to see officials exercise stronger oversight over utility companies. Just 29 percent believe their state government does a good job of protecting consumer interests when it comes to utilities, a nearly 10 percentage point drop from last year (38 percent).

Americans are skeptical of elected officials' power to fight rising utility bills, and they do not believe the government does a good job of protecting consumer interests from utility companies. The majority (64 percent) believe energy bills will rise no matter what. Only 39 percent believe elected officials have the ability to lower utility bills in the next year. Slightly more people (45 percent) believe their elected officials can lower energy bills, but it will require a longer timeline.

Respondents were the most enthusiastic about supporting candidates who promise to lower their rates (79 percent). But very few respondents actually report hearing local, state, or federal officials discussing utility costs as an issue: 36 percent reported hearing "a little" from officials, while the majority (53 percent) reported hearing nothing at all.

Consumers' feelings on utility bills spread across party lines.

32% of Democrats

30% of Republicans

26% of Independents

feel their state government does a good job protecting their interests in utility regulation.

85% of Democrats

82% of Republicans

81% of Independents

feel powerless to control their utility bills.

84% of Democrats

80% of Republicans

78% of Independents

would support candidates who promise to lower their rates.



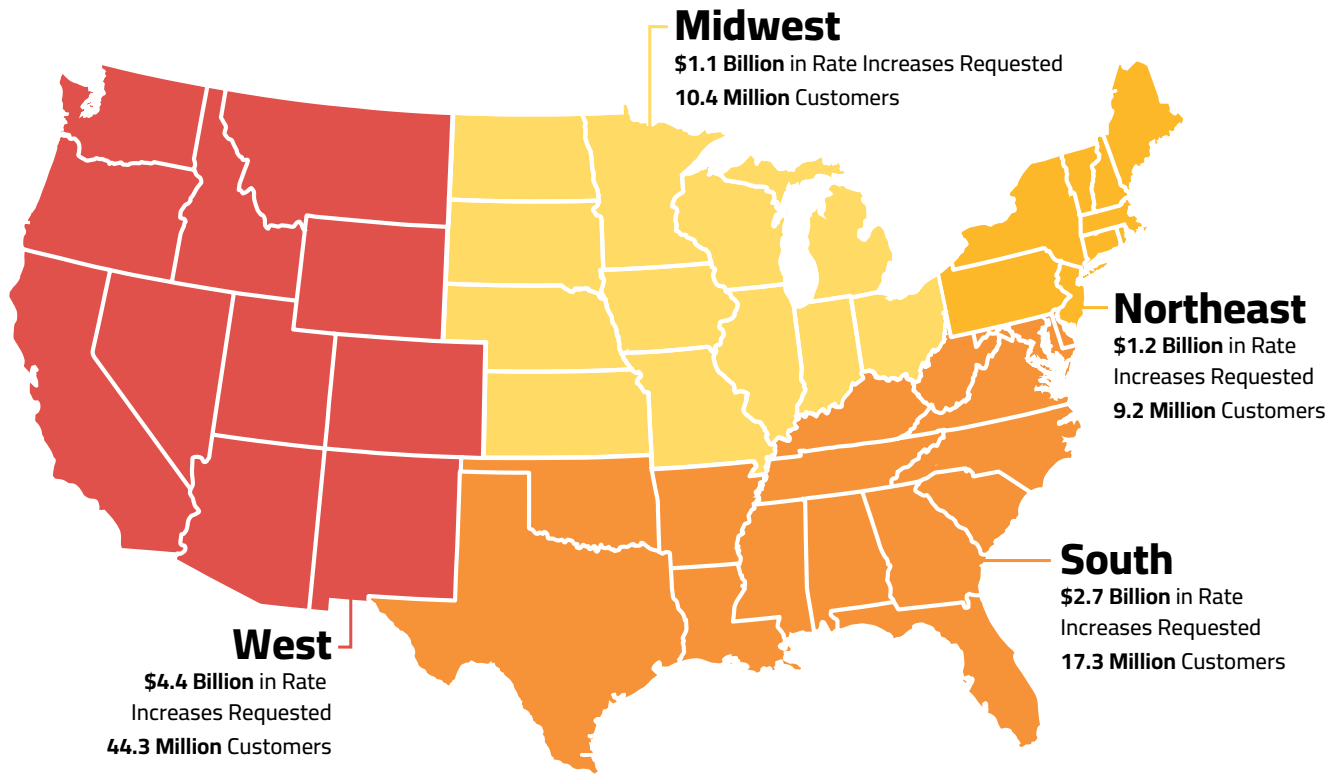
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03

KEY RESULTS: Q1 RATE INCREASE REQUESTS

PowerLines' analysis found utilities filed \$9.4 billion in rate requests across more than 81 million customers in the first quarter of this year alone.

Q1 2026 Rate Increase Requests Affect 81 Million Customers



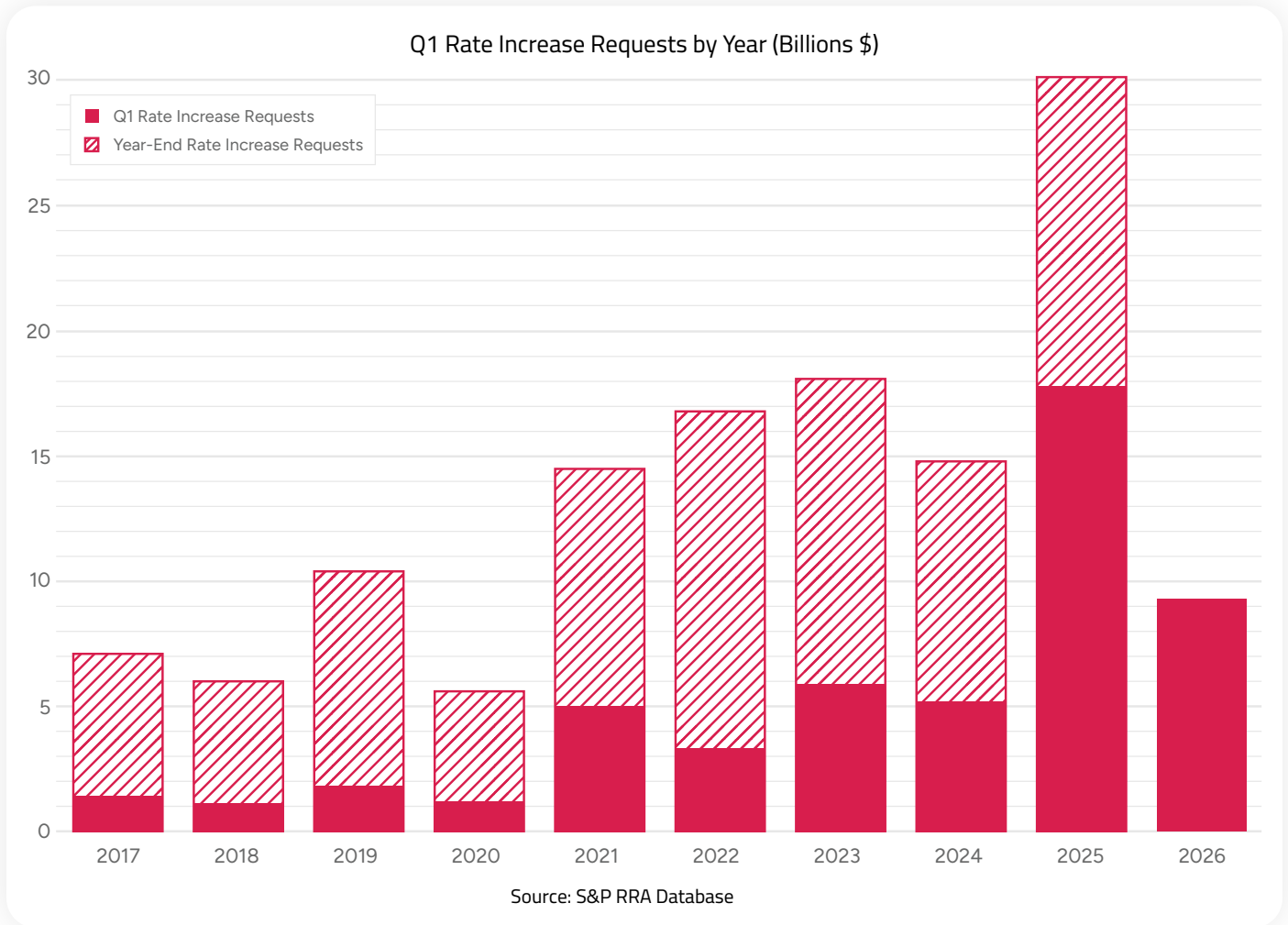
Source: Individual sources can be found in the **Appendix**.

PowerLines’ analysis found utilities filed \$9.4 billion in rate requests across more than 81 million customers in the first quarter of this year alone. Drivers included higher returns on capital projects (power plants, transmission lines), inflation, rising operating costs, aging infrastructure, and severe weather.

Western utilities filed the total highest amount of rate requests at \$4.4 billion, with several utilities citing increasing risk from and

response to wildfires as a top driver of bill increases. Damage from Hurricane Helene led to the largest rate request this quarter in the South from Georgia Power, which requested more than \$900 million in cost recovery from consumers from that storm alone. Increased electricity demand is also driving rate requests in that region, particularly in Virginia, where data center development has been booming. Northeast and Midwest utilities, meanwhile, filed requests largely driven by

aging infrastructure, particularly across their transmission and distribution systems. Both regions are seeing increased pushback from state officials, from the governor’s office to the public utilities commission.






04

WHY ARE BILLS RISING?

PowerLines analyzed the reasons behind the more than 80 utility requests for bill increases in 2025. Though there is some regional variation, several central factors are clear.



1/3 & 1/2
OF TRANSMISSION SYSTEMS OF DISTRIBUTION SYSTEMS
are operating near or beyond their useful life.



Photo By: Ryan Christopher Jones

Today, nearly one-third of the transmission systems and almost half of the distribution systems are operating near or beyond their useful life, and significant improvements are needed to ensure safe and reliable electricity can be delivered to consumers at reasonable prices.⁴ It will be expensive to invest in necessary grid infrastructure replacements and improvements. The takeaway from these findings is that, in an affordability-constrained environment, it is even more imperative regulators ensure grid spending is as efficient and consumer-oriented as possible.

PowerLines' data indicates many utilities are opting to build new, capital-intensive infrastructure from which they can earn a return

on equity. A recent PowerLines' analysis found utilities are planning to spend \$1.4 trillion in capital expenditures (CapEx) by 2030, a 21 percent increase over the 5-year planned capital spending amount from the previous year.⁵ Regulators and policymakers could instead incentivize utilities to find ways to improve the efficiency of the existing grid before turning to capital spending.

Other factors, such as extreme weather and rapid electric demand increases driven by data centers—including in places where demand has been stagnant or decreasing for decades—are cited by utilities as major drivers of the overall rise in utility bills. Many of these problems can be resolved through active regulatory scrutiny

⁴ institute.bankofamerica.com/content/dam/transformation/us-electrical-grid.pdf

⁵ powerlines.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/0413_PowerLines-CapEx-Report.pdf

to ensure utilities are prioritizing cost-efficient solutions. Indeed, it may be that growing customer demand can put downward pressure on rates when it helps improve the utilization of the grid while minimizing the amount of new infrastructure spending needed to achieve similar performance outcomes.

The story of rising utility bills is complex. Utilities and regulators both play a role in ensuring consumers are not paying more than they should for basic services.

The job of the commissions is to ensure utility rates for customers are “just and reasonable.” This function is critical, as investor-owned utilities are granted monopoly status and are not typically subject to competition for customers in their utility service territory that would ordinarily ensure optimal consumer prices. When utilities seek to raise rates on customers, they typically file a rate case proceeding with the PUC in which the utility justifies its expenditures, including proposed investments. These costs may include spending on construction, maintenance, operating costs of equipment and infrastructure, and safety and performance improvements. The PUC determines whether this utility spending is prudent. If the PUC deems costs prudent, regulators will grant the

How Rates are Determined

The electricity and gas prices consumers pay their utility companies are typically set by state-level government regulators known as state public utilities commissions (PUCs) or public service commissions (PSCs). These bodies generally have the power to determine how much people pay for energy, what investments utilities make, and where certain energy projects are located.

utilities the opportunity to recoup those costs through consumer rates, a process known as cost recovery.

The frequency of rate cases varies by state, depending on statutory requirements. During a rate case, the utility and the PUC undergo a formal legal process involving significant information requests and analysis to determine whether the utility’s capital expenditures, based primarily on either historical spending or projected future costs, were reasonable, prudent, and in the public interest. Other parties can participate as intervenors, which may include consumer advocates, trade associations, government bodies, businesses,

residential customers, and other stakeholders. The PUC ultimately determines how much the utility is allowed to charge customers via their rates. The conventional process by which utility regulation occurs is known as cost of service regulation (COSR), which reflects the theory that utility rates should be based on the cost the utility incurs to provide utility service to its customers, and the utility should have an opportunity to earn a profit on its capital investments.

Utilities generally earn a rate of return on capital expenditures but not operational expenditures. As a result, utilities tend to favor capital-intensive infrastructure investments over other types of investments, as these capital investments can yield greater financial returns for their shareholders than deployment of solutions that enhance operational efficiency, even when such solutions may lower utility bills.⁶

It is incumbent on state PUCs and consumer advocates to ensure utility investments are sufficiently protecting the public interest, despite these structural incentives. Most states have a statutory consumer advocate, which is typically structured as a department within the PUC, a state government agency housed outside of the PUC, or an independent



State PUCs badly need stakeholder, consumer, and public input, yet rarely receive it.

third-party nonprofit organization. However, some states lack a consumer advocate. And in most states, very few consumers are ultimately engaged in PUC processes, which are highly technical, opaque, and fundamentally inaccessible to the average utility consumer. State PUCs badly need stakeholder, consumer, and public input, yet rarely receive it. Thus, there is a critical opportunity to ensure consumer perspectives are further centered in utility regulation going forward.⁷



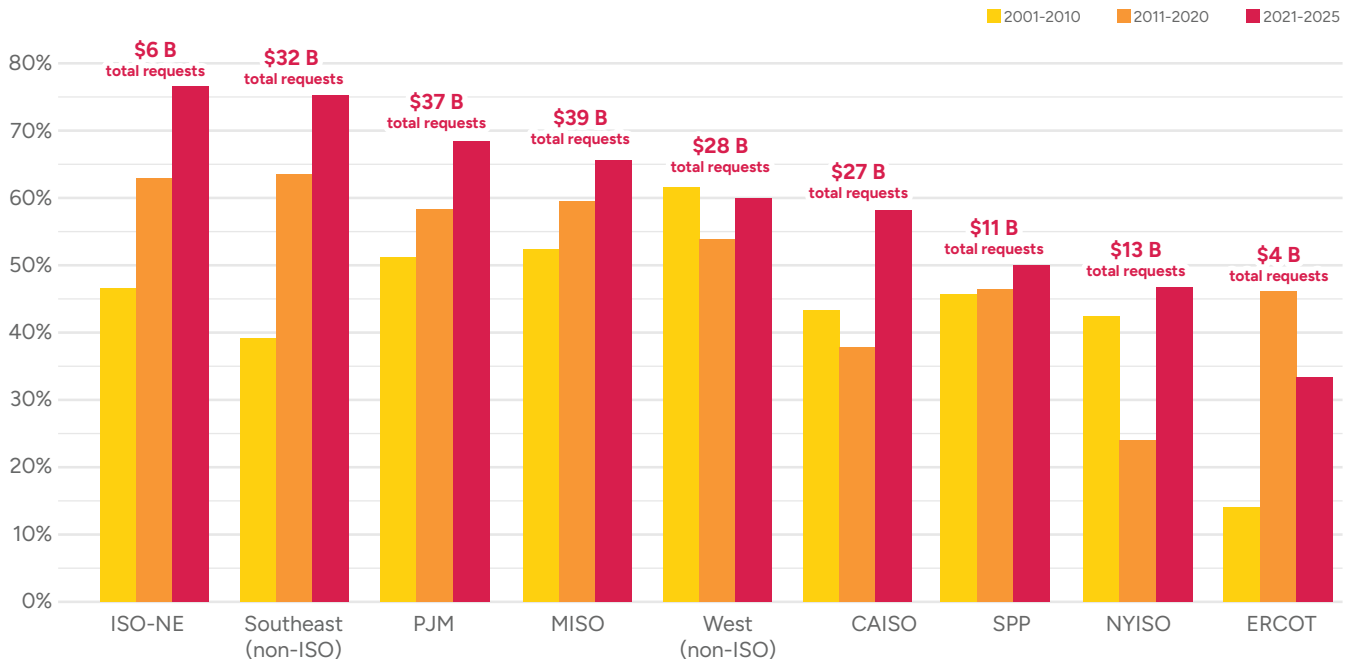
⁶ This is in contrast with performance-based regulation (PBR), which explicitly ties a utility's financial performance to its execution against certain predefined target outcomes.
⁷ National Council on Electricity Policy, pubs.naruc.org/pub/21475F72-1866-DAAC-99FB-1E3EE0593D06

05

REGIONAL BREAKDOWN

Consumers across the country remain concerned about bill increases, and want to see decisive action from elected officials to combat rising costs.

Regulatory Approval Levels for IOU Rate Increase Requests by Region
 Approvals as a percent of revenue increase requests



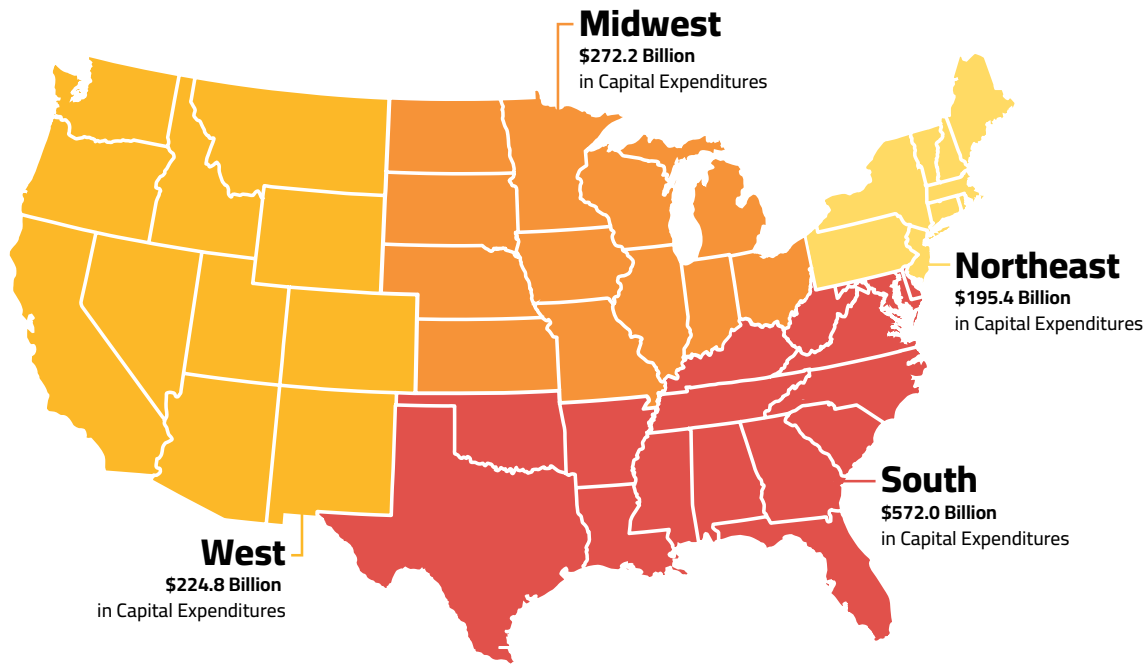
Source: [Lawrence Berkeley National Lab](#)

MIDWEST

Midwestern rate hikes relatively low compared to other regions

Midwestern states saw the lowest total amount of rate hike requests this quarter, with utilities requesting \$1.1 billion in increases across more than 10 million customers. However, utilities in the region have plans to spend \$272.2 billion in CapEx through 2030. Requests were largely driven by new distribution and transmission investments, including investments intended to enhance the safety and reliability of the current system. Rising operations and maintenance costs, rising debt costs, and additional return on equity (ROE) charges were also included in Midwest utility rate requests. Utilities in Illinois, Michigan, Missouri, Ohio, and South Dakota all requested rate increases this quarter.

Breakdown of Capital Spending by Region



Source: Individual sources can be found in PowerLines' [CapEx Report](#).

Case Study: People's Gas Light and Coke Company

People's Gas requested the region's biggest rate increase this quarter, asking Illinois regulators to approve a \$202 million rate hike that is expected to raise customer bills by \$10 to \$11 per month beginning next year.⁸ The request comes just three years after the utility filed its largest rate hike in state history, at \$303 million.

People's Gas says the increase is needed to meet regulatory orders to retire its more than 1,000 miles of old iron natural gas pipes that run under Chicago and that home heating bills in the city will still remain lower than those in other major U.S. cities. Its proposal follows

People's Gas Coverage Map



Coverage area is approximate. ([Source](#))

8 capitolnewsillinois.com/news/peoples-gas-files-202-million-rate-increase-request-with-illinois-regulatory-body/

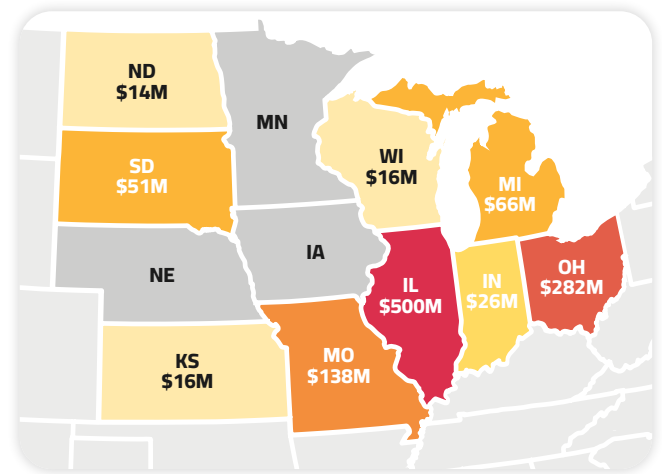
an investigation into the utility by the Illinois Commerce Commission, where the state found its pipeline replacement program went over budget and did not adequately prioritize safety.⁹

Advocates and consumers in the state are sharply pushing back on the latest rate proposal, arguing there are more cost-effective approaches available to the utility, including lining the system’s pipelines to reduce leaks and extend the overall life of the assets.¹⁰ Consumer advocates also raised red flags about the plan’s request to raise shareholder return on equity to 10.1 percent—up from the 9.38 percent return approved in the last rate case.

Midwest states see second highest bill increases

This year’s polling found Midwestern consumers reported some of the highest bill increases since last year, with 73 percent of respondents reporting higher costs. In total, Midwesterners reported their average monthly bills were \$218.38.¹¹ An additional 79 percent of respondents in the region are very or somewhat concerned about additional increases this year. Consumers are most frustrated by their lack of choice in utility

Q1 2026 Utility Rate Increase Requests By State (Millions \$)



Source: Individual sources can be found in the **Appendix**.

providers (41 percent), closely followed by month-to-month price changes (39 percent).

Respondents in the Midwest have some faith in their utilities

While Midwestern respondents remain concerned about rising utility bills, they recorded higher levels of trust and transparency with their energy providers. Nearly a third of respondents believe their utility is offering the best rate possible. Nearly two-thirds of respondents believe they have the information they need to understand their electricity usage, 61 percent believe energy bills are easy to understand, and 45 percent agree or strongly agree their utility provides access to opportunities to lower their bills.

9 capitolnewsillinois.com/news/state-cracks-down-on-chicago-gas-utility-as-other-utilities-ask-for-rate-increase/

10 capitolnewsillinois.com/news/a-hardship-peoples-gas-customers-rally-against-requested-rate-hike/

11 Bill costs were self-reported by respondents in February, and may not reflect exact pricing.

Nearly half (47 percent) of Midwestern consumers trust their utilities to explain their bills to them.

Customers in the region also appeared relatively satisfied with their energy service overall.

Midwestern utility bill payers were more likely to agree (47 percent) that their bill costs justify the service they receive than disagree (42 percent).

Rising bills have little effect on perception of elected officials, but Midwesterners still hope they act to lower costs

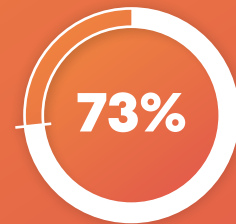
Most respondents in the Midwest reported their bills did not impact their perceptions of local utility companies or state elected officials, with 54 percent reporting no impact on the former and 62 percent the latter.

But consumers are eager to see action from their elected officials. Midwesterners were enthusiastic about government action to lower bills, with 78 percent agreeing they'd like to see officials step in. They remained split or unsure on whether elected officials actually have the ability to lower bills within the next year.

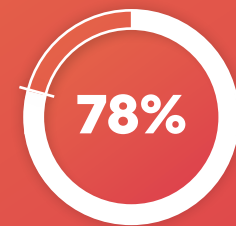
Key Stats: Midwest



Utilities requested **\$1.1 Billion** in rate increases in Q1 2026 alone.



of Midwest respondents reported higher utility bills since last year.

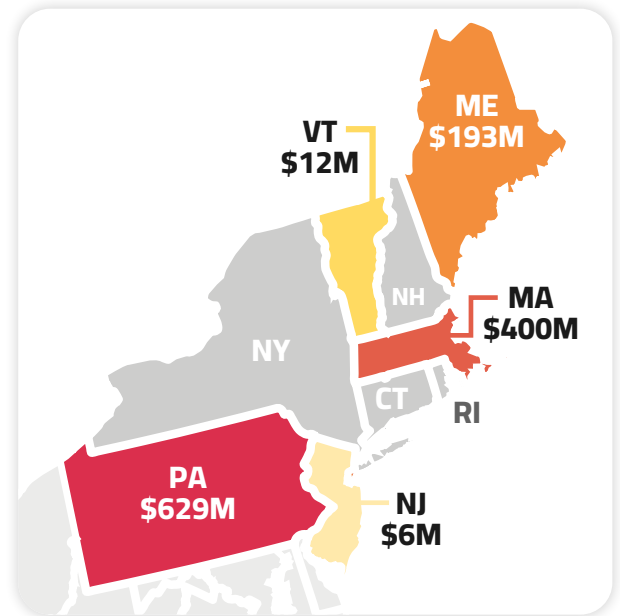


of Midwest respondents want to see elected officials step in to combat rising costs.

NORTHEAST

Northeast utilities requested \$1.2 billion in rate hike requests across 9 million customers this quarter, and plan to spend another \$195.4 billion in CapEx by the end of the decade.¹² Utilities attributed many of their requests to infrastructure investments, with several citing the need for a “fair return” on their capital investments. Gas infrastructure was also a theme. National Grid requested \$342 million from Massachusetts regulators in part to upgrade its liquefied natural gas facilities to support system reliability during peak demand periods, as well as to upgrade the rest of its gas system to comply with safety laws.

Q1 2026 Utility Rate Increase Requests By State (Millions \$)



Source: Individual sources can be found in the **Appendix**.

Case Study: PECO

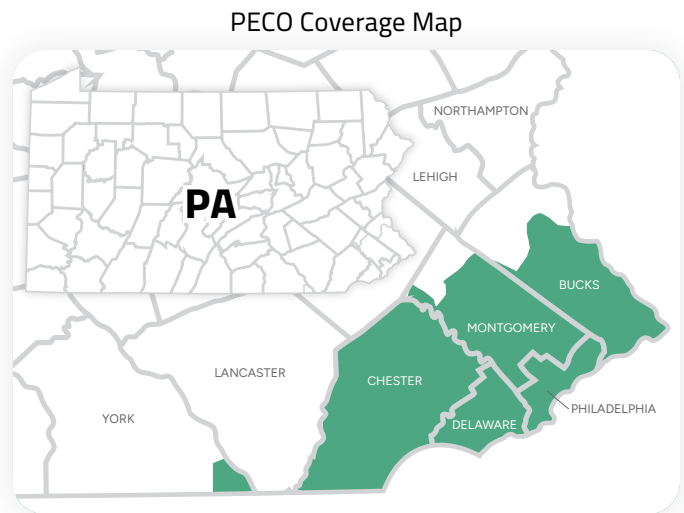
Pennsylvania-based Exelon subsidiary PECO requested more than a combined \$500 million increase between its gas and electric utilities, an increase it said would be necessary to provide the utility a “fair return” on “substantial investments,” as well as to support infrastructure replacement, new information technology, and other increased “public service” costs.

The rate request would have raised bills by 12.5 percent across Philadelphia and its suburbs, equivalent to \$20.08 extra per month for electricity customers and \$14.52 per month for gas customers. PECO’s request also sought a 10.95 percent return on equity for its investors—nearly a full percent higher than the U.S. average—as part of the rate increase. PECO last raised rates in 2025, hiking energy bills for Pennsylvanians by 10 percent while profits jumped nearly 50 percent.¹³ Prior to that, the utility raised rates four times between 2015 and 2025.

¹² powerlines.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/0413_PowerLines-CapEx-Report.pdf

¹³ why.org/articles/peco-rate-hikes-profits/

The utility immediately drew backlash from Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro, who called the request “pure greed,” and pledged to do “everything [he] can to stop it.”¹⁴ Less than three weeks after the filing, PECO announced its withdrawal of the request, after “taking into consideration conversations with Governor Josh Shapiro, as well as input from customers, community partners, and stakeholders.”¹⁵ Governor Shapiro announced his administration would “continue to collaborate with PECO and other Pennsylvania utilities to encourage increased utilization of lower-cost options to finance needed system upgrades and greater reliance on cost-saving technologies that improve the performance of existing infrastructure.”¹⁶



Coverage area is approximate. (Source)

Bill Impact: Northeast respondents report high levels of bill increases, payment stress

Northeast respondents were stressed about bill increases across the board. A large portion of consumers reported a bill increase within the last year (77 percent) and were highly concerned about future bill increases (83 percent). In total, the region reported an average utility payment of \$238 per month, nearly \$20 more than the next highest region.

Consumers also appeared to have a harder time paying their bills and understanding where costs are coming from. Northeast respondents feel helpless to do anything about their rising costs (84 percent), and the majority reported energy costs contribute to their financial stress (65 percent). Respondents also reported higher levels of difficulty in paying their energy bills, with 30 percent finding it very or somewhat difficult. And their top frustration with their utility provider is the price change from month to month (42 percent), followed by a lack of transparency around what’s driving energy costs (37 percent).

14 radio.wpsu.org/2026-04-09/pennsylvania-gov-josh-shapiro-calls-peco-rate-hike-request-pure-greed

15 www.peco.com/news/news-releases/2026-04-16

16 www.pa.gov/governor/newsroom/2026-press-releases/gov-shapiro-saves-1-7m-pa-consumers--510m-on-utility-bills



Photo By: Dustin Chambers

Consumers in the Northeast are highly skeptical of their utilities

Northeast consumers appear both less informed about their energy companies and more skeptical of their utilities' intentions.

Nearly a third of respondents report not being familiar with their utility company, while nearly two-thirds are unfamiliar with their utility regulator. More than half of respondents (55 percent) report not being familiar with how their utility company makes money, and 40 percent are not sure how their electric and gas bills are determined. The majority of respondents don't understand what they're being charged for (63 percent) and don't believe their bills are easy to understand (50 percent).

Meanwhile, trust in local electric and gas companies appears low. The majority of utility bill payers (56 percent) disagree their utility is offering them the most affordable rate possible, and only 35 percent agree the quality of utility company service justifies the cost of their bills—lower than any other region. Consumers in the region also have the lowest level of confidence that their energy companies put consumer interests above their own, with only 9 percent agreeing. And they reported highly negative association with their utilities tied to their latest power bill, with 46 percent saying their perception of their energy company worsened because of it.

Northeast consumers don't trust elected officials to act on lowering bill costs, but still want action

Consumers in the Northeast were pessimistic about their elected officials' capacity or willingness to respond to rising energy prices and had a negative view of local, state, and federal officials overall. Two-thirds of respondents believe bills will continue to rise regardless of what elected officials do. They were also likely to strongly disagree (28 percent) their state does a good job of protecting consumer interests in regulating utilities, with 70 percent in total disagreeing.

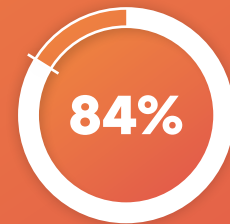
The region also reported a high percentage of respondents whose perception of state and national elected officials worsened because of rising energy costs. Thirty-eight percent tied a more negative view of state officials to their energy bills, while 41 percent said their perception of nationally elected officials worsened.

Paradoxically, respondents in this region were likely to report hearing politicians talk a lot about rising energy costs as a problem, with more than half reporting at least some commentary on the issue. They were also likely to support a candidate who promises to lower their utility bills (83 percent), and change the regulatory system entirely (82 percent), while 81 percent want to see more state oversight over utilities.

Key Stats: Northeast



Utilities requested **\$1.2 Billion** in rate increases in Q1 2026 alone.



of Northeast respondents feel helpless to do anything about rising utility costs.

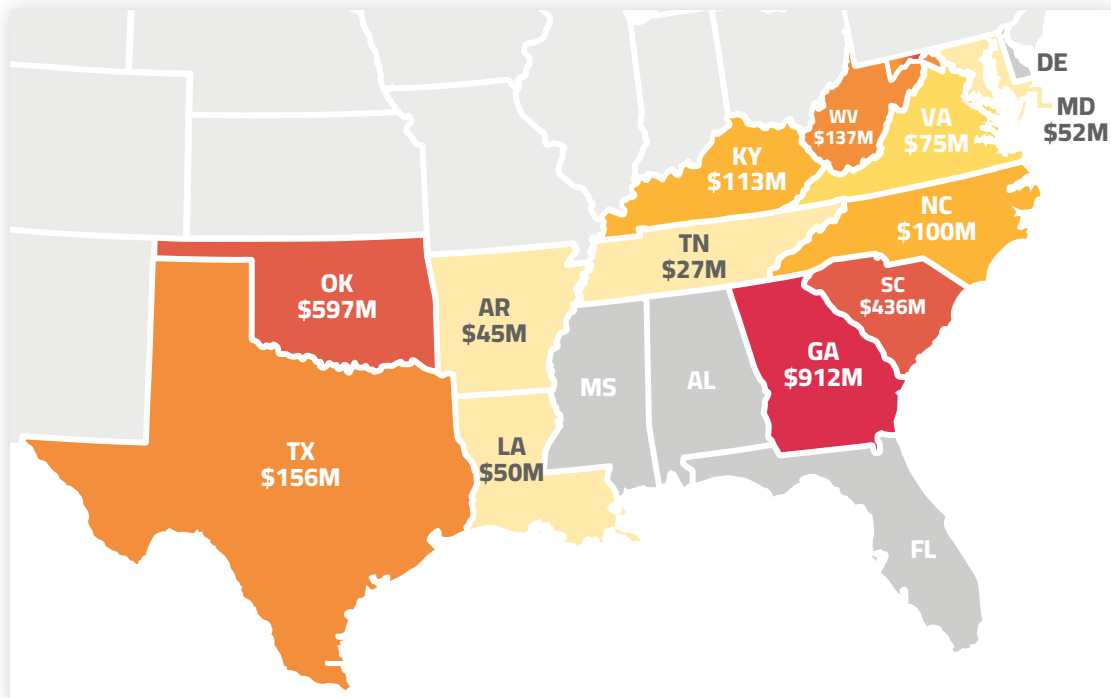


of Northeast respondents disagree that their state does a good job of protecting consumer interests.

SOUTH

Southern utilities requested \$2.7 billion across more than 17 million customers in the first quarter of this year, driven by aging transmission, distribution, and generation assets, severe weather, and returns on CapEx. Planned CapEx spending in the region is the largest in the country, with utilities filing a combined \$572 billion in planned expenditures through 2030.¹⁷ In this quarter alone, the region reported the second-highest rate requests, with the largest proposal coming from Georgia Power, which is requesting to recover over \$900 million in costs associated with damages from Hurricane Helene, after freezing base rates last summer. South Carolina utilities Dominion Energy and Duke Energy are requesting more than \$300 million and about \$100 million, respectively, to recover costs associated with their energy efficiency and demand-side management programs. Meanwhile, Dominion is requesting \$70 million across its Virginia territory to help pay for a new natural gas plant, which is being built in part to support rising demand from data centers.

Q1 2026 Utility Rate Increase Requests By State (Millions \$)

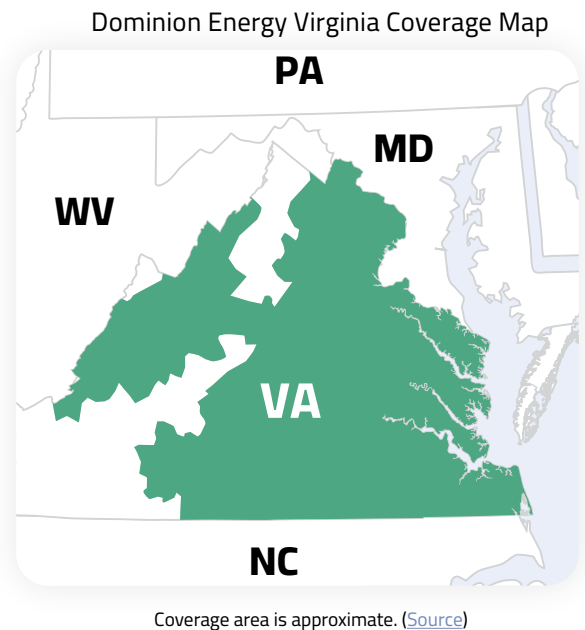


Source: Individual sources can be found in the **Appendix**.

17 powerlines.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/0413_PowerLines-CapEx-Report.pdf

Case Study: Dominion Energy Virginia

Dominion Energy filed a request in March with regulators to recoup from customers \$70 million related to its construction and operation, plus associated transmission and interconnection costs, of a 944-megawatt gas plant.¹⁸ The \$1.47 billion plant will run at about 33 percent capacity, largely to fill gaps during extreme hot or cold periods as demand in the region rises.¹⁹ Dominion’s territory has seen some of the highest demand increases from rapid data center expansion across its footprint: Virginia is home to 35 percent of global hyperscale data centers.²⁰



Dominion also requested a rider increase in April to help pay for coal ash cleanup at the site, which was formerly a coal plant. That rider is expected to cost residential customers an additional \$0.53 monthly.²¹ The requests follow a base rate increase of \$8.51 per month starting this year, and an expected additional \$2 per month starting in 2027, which the utility said was driven by inflationary pressures and investments needed to serve rising power demand.²²

Southern respondents report lower stress about future rate increases, but still find budgeting energy bills a challenge

Southern respondents reported relatively low average monthly bills, at \$217.53 per month, with 32 percent of bills remaining the same, while 63 percent reporting an increase.

The number of people concerned about future rate spikes outpaced the number of people who reported an increase this year, at 63 percent. Respondents also reported difficulty in budgeting their electricity bills, with 30 percent finding it very or somewhat difficult to do so. Their top frustration with their energy providers was price changes from month to month and a lack of choice in utility providers, tied at 38 percent.

18 www.scc.virginia.gov/docketsearch/DOCS/8%40th01!.PDF

19 virginiamercury.com/briefs/scc-declines-to-reconsider-chesterfield-gas-plant-approval-advocacy-groups-appeal-air-permit/

20 www.vedp.org/industry/data-centers

21 www.vpm.org/news/2026-04-08/ccr-coal-combustion-residuals-chesterfield-dumfries-chesapeake-bremo

22 news.dominionenergy.com/press-releases/press-releases/2025/Dominion-Energy-Virginia-proposes-new-rates-to-continue-delivering-reliable-service-and-increasingly-clean-energy/default.aspx



Photo By: Ryan Christopher Jones

Consumers in the South report lukewarm trust in utilities, transparency remains an issue

Southern consumers still report frustrations with their energy companies' transparency and available options to reduce rates, despite some familiarity and trust with their provider.

The majority of respondents reported being familiar with how their electricity and gas bills are determined (67 percent) and with their utility generally (73 percent). Just under half of respondents believe the quality and reliability of their service justified the cost of their bills, with 46 percent agreeing and 42 percent disagreeing. Roughly half of respondents do not believe their utility is giving them the best rate possible, and only 28 percent of respondents believe their company is giving them the best deal.

Of Southern respondents, 42 percent disagree that their utility gives them adequate opportunities to reduce their monthly bills, and 40 percent say the utility gives them those opportunities.

And although most agree their utility gives them the information they need to understand their electricity usage, a higher share disagrees (27 percent) relative to other regions.

Southern respondents see smaller connection between public policy and energy costs

Consumers in the South were likely to perceive energy costs rising as unrelated to larger economic trends. Perhaps related, many respondents reported hearing nothing at all from politicians on energy costs (56 percent).

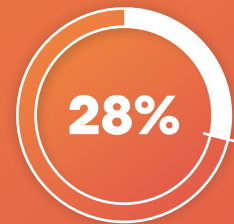
The majority of respondents also reported no change in how their power bill affected their perception of their energy company, state official, or national officials, with 57 percent, 60 percent, and 61 percent reporting no difference, respectively.

Southerners appeared split or unsure on what exactly politicians can do to lower bills, with 23 percent reporting they weren't sure if elected officials could lower bills at all, and the rest of the responses split. They reported similar uncertainty on whether lowering bills might be possible—but would take more than a year. Although the majority of consumers would like to see stronger oversight on utilities and generally want the government to step in and lower bills, many respondents disagreed with those policy tools (21 percent and 20 percent, respectively).

Key Stats: South



Utilities requested **\$2.7 Billion** in rate increases in Q1 2026 alone.



of Southern respondents believe their utility gives them the best rate possible.



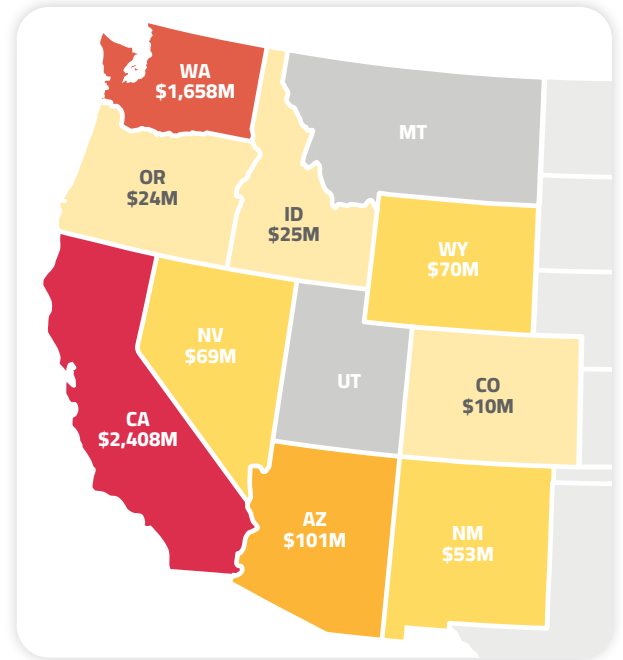
of Southern respondents hear nothing from politicians on energy costs.

WEST

Western states see highest rate requests in Q1 2026

Utilities in the West requested \$4.4 billion in rate increases across 44 million customers in the first quarter of this year, and have an additional \$224.8 billion in CapEx spending planned over the next five years. Many of the requests this quarter were driven by higher operating and debt costs, infrastructure spending, and increasing threats from and responses to wildfires. Puget Sound Energy (PSE) filed the largest rate hike, requesting \$1.2 billion to upgrade aging infrastructure, meet rising demand, and adapt to increasingly severe weather. In total, \$1.8 billion in rate requests were associated with, to some degree, rising wildfire and extreme weather costs.

Q1 2026 Utility Rate Increase Requests By State (Millions \$)



Source: Individual sources can be found in the **Appendix**.

Case study: Wildfires draw rate requests across at least four utilities

PSE, California-based Bear Valley Electric, PacifiCorp in Oregon and California, and Hawaiian Electric all listed wildfires as contributing factors to their rate requests for the first quarter of this year. PSE listed wildfires and extreme weather as a contributing factor to overall grid stress, helping to drive up the costs of the utility’s long-term plan to expand its renewable energy investments to meet state climate goals. Other utilities cited wildfires as the primary driver of their rate requests.

Bear Valley Electric said a “significant portion” of its \$15 million rate request was to address the ongoing threat of wildfires in California, including mitigation measures required by state law to reduce the threat of its own equipment sparking a fire. PacifiCorp filed a \$340 million rate request to recover costs related to the 2020 Slater fire and 2022 McKinney fire. The utility reached a \$575 million settlement with the United States in February of this year to resolve claims related to its

involvement in sparking the two wildfires, which collectively burned nearly 200,000 acres of federal land.²³

Hawaiian Electric is requesting \$170 million in rate increases it attributes in part to skyrocketing insurance premiums following the Maui wildfires. The utility reached a \$47.75 million settlement with shareholders earlier this year who had accused the utility of falsely claiming it had taken appropriate measures to reduce wildfire risks. The utility had previously agreed to pay half of a \$4 billion settlement to compensate victims.^{24,25}

Western states report lowest financial impact from energy bills

Respondents in the West reported the lowest average monthly bills by a wide margin at \$169 per month—nearly \$50 lower than the next-lowest region.²⁶ Overall, 67 percent reported a bill increase in the last year, and 29 percent reported their bill remained the same.

Nearly two-thirds of respondents found it very or somewhat easy to budget their monthly gas and electric bills. But respondents remain frustrated with the lack of choice in a utility



Photo By: Ryan Christopher Jones

provider, with 43 percent reporting it as a top grievance, followed by concerns about price changes month to month at 36 percent.

Western utility bill payers feel utilities are not giving them the best deal

While Western respondents were likely to feel they had adequate information to understand their electricity usage (67 percent), and to agree their utility gives them good opportunities to lower their monthly bill

23 www.justice.gov/opa/pr/pacificcorp-agrees-pay-575m-settle-claims-damage-caused-six-wildfires-california-and-oregon

24 www.reuters.com/business/energy/hawaiian-electric-reaches-4775-million-shareholder-settlement-over-maui-2026-01-05/

25 www.hawaiipublicradio.org/local-news/2025-08-07/2-years-after-the-wildfires-4b-settlement-will-be-divided

26 Respondents in the West were most likely to indicate they were served by a public or municipal utility, though consumers across the board appeared to have overreported public utilities and underreported IOUs. Thirty five percent of Western respondents reported their utility was public or municipal, versus 31 percent who were served by a private or investor-owned utility.

(45 percent), they still believe their utility can do more to lower prices. The majority of respondents (52 percent) disagreed that their utility gives them the best rate possible. They also remained split on whether the service they receive justifies the costs they pay, with 43 percent agreeing and 44 percent disagreeing.

Consumers out West are wary of elected official response, want decisive action

Western state respondents appear to place more blame on public officials for rising energy costs than some other regions, with 37 percent reporting a negative association with their state elected officials because of their bills. They were also likely to believe their elected officials cannot do anything to lower bills in the next year (40 percent).

Although the majority (63 percent) believe bills will continue to rise regardless of elected official action (22 percent) disagree and believe public officials can take action.

Key Stats: West



Utilities requested **\$4.4 Billion** in rate increases in Q1 2026 alone.



of Western respondents disagree that the service they receive justifies the cost.



of Western respondents report a negative association with their state elected officials because of their bills.

06

SOLUTIONS

Although the outlook for consumers appears dim, there is a wide set of policy tools available that can address the growing affordability crisis.

Several solutions exist that could help protect consumers from skyrocketing costs. Experts have proposed a wide set of policy tools to help combat the growing energy affordability crisis, including:

01

Developing a more transparent ratemaking process to ensure consumers and advocates understand how rates are being determined.

02

Reforming utility incentive structures and rate design to better incentivize utility performance and efficiency over capital spending.

03

Modernizing integrated resource planning (IRP) processes to ensure integration of best practices.

04

Reining in “Construction Work in Progress” costs, which allow utilities to charge consumers for infrastructure projects that are not yet operational.

05

Ensuring state PUCs and consumer advocate offices have the necessary resources to enable effective consumer protection and regulatory oversight.

06

Advancing policies that promote solutions to maximize the efficiency of existing grid infrastructure, including grid-enhancing technologies, energy efficiency, and demand-side solutions.

07

CONCLUSION

Rising utility bills are placing increasing strain on American households, with consumers facing higher costs, greater volatility, and limited control over the factors driving their energy expenses.

While utilities point to necessary investments, extreme weather, and growing demand as justification for rate increases, consumers remain unconvinced these costs are being managed efficiently or transparently.

At the same time, there is a clear disconnect between public demand for action and confidence in policymakers' ability to deliver meaningful relief. Consumers want stronger oversight and tangible solutions, yet many believe rising bills are inevitable regardless of government intervention.

Consumer skepticism, combined with growing financial stress, underscores the urgency of addressing both the underlying causes

of rising costs and the regulatory system meant to keep those costs in check. This moment creates an enormous opportunity for politicians and policymakers who could exceed low expectations by delivering concrete solutions.

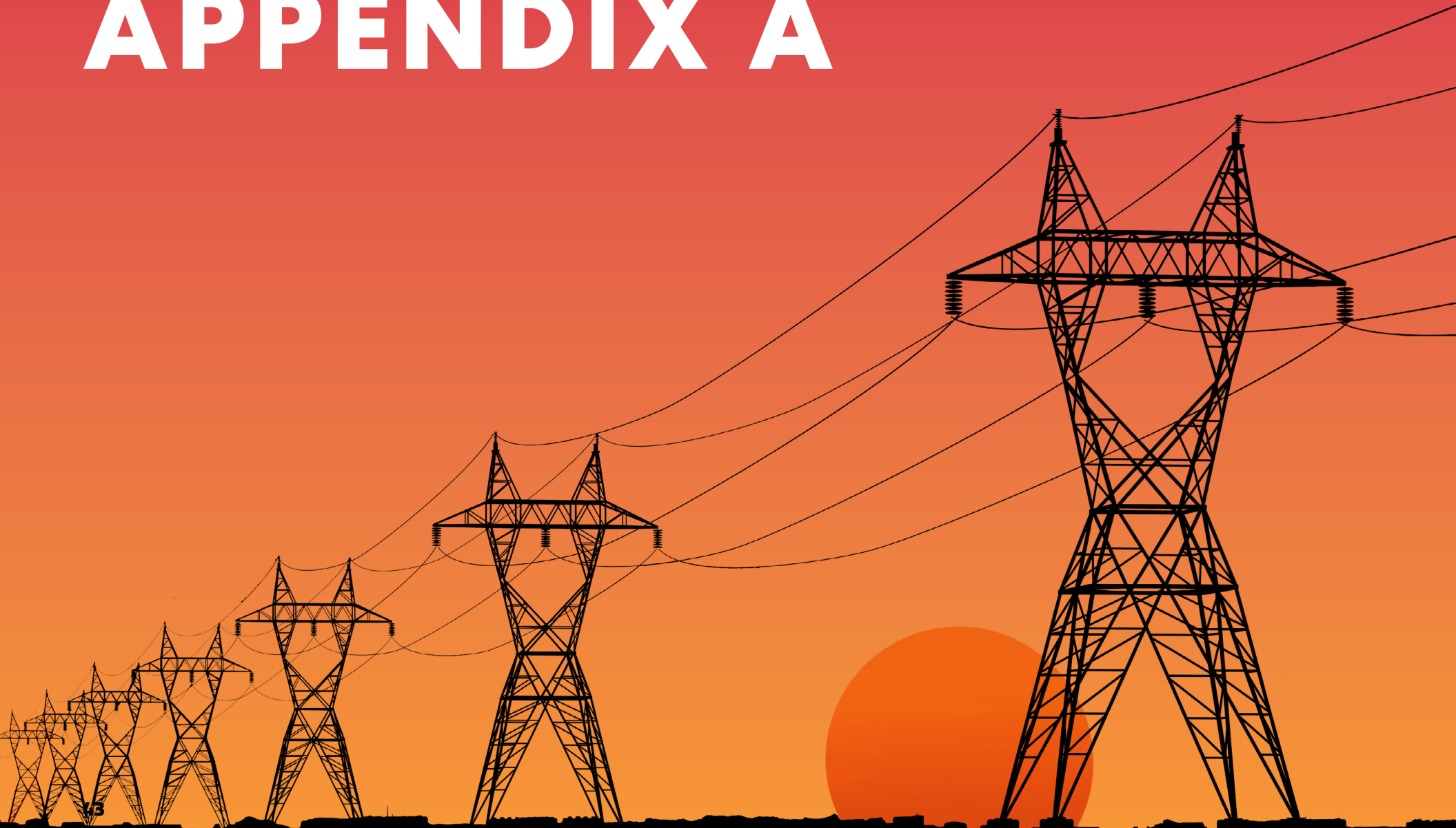
Ensuring affordable, reliable energy will require a more balanced approach—one that prioritizes cost-effective grid modernization, strengthens regulatory accountability, and improves transparency for consumers. Without meaningful action, rising utility bills will continue to erode household financial stability and public trust in both utilities and the institutions meant to oversee them.



”

Consumer skepticism, combined with growing financial stress, underscores the urgency of addressing both the underlying causes of rising costs and the regulatory system meant to keep those costs in check. This moment creates an enormous opportunity for politicians and policymakers who could exceed low expectations by delivering concrete solutions.

APPENDIX A



Methodology

SURVEY

This PowerLines Utility Bill study was conducted between March 14-16, 2026, by Ipsos using the probability-based KnowledgePanel®. This poll is based on a nationally representative probability sample of 2,045 adults age 18 or older. The sample includes 1,912 respondents who are partially or fully responsible for paying the electricity and gas utility bills in their household each month. The margin of sampling error for this study is plus or minus 2.2 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level for results based on the general population sample of adults and plus or minus 2.3 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level for results based on the sample of bill payers. The margin of sampling error takes into account the design effect, which was 1.08. In our reporting of the findings, percentage points are rounded off to the nearest whole number. As a result, percentages in a given table column may total slightly higher or lower than 100%. In questions that permit multiple responses, columns may total substantially more than 100%, depending on the number of different responses offered by each respondent. The data were weighted to reflect the U.S. 18+ adult population by gender by age, race/ethnicity, Census region, education, household income, and political party identification.

The survey was conducted using KnowledgePanel, the largest and most well-established online probability-based panel that is representative of the adult U.S. population. Our recruitment process employs a scientifically developed addressed-based sampling methodology using the latest Delivery Sequence File of the USPS – a database with full coverage of all delivery points in the U.S. Households invited to join the panel are randomly selected from all available households in the U.S. Persons in the sampled households are invited to join and participate in the panel. Those selected who do not already have internet access are provided a tablet and internet connection at no cost to the panel member. Those who join the panel and who are selected to participate in a survey are sent a unique password-protected log-in used to complete surveys online. As a result of our recruitment and sampling methodologies, samples from KnowledgePanel cover all households regardless of their phone or internet status and findings can be reported with a margin of sampling error and projected to the general population.

Electric and Gas Utility Rate Increases from the 1st Quarter, 2026

State	Utility	Region	# of Customers	Type	When Requested	Requested Rate Increase (Billion \$)*	Source
Arkansas	Entergy Arkansas	South	738,000	Electric	February 2026	0.0	Arkansas Public Service Commission
California	Bear Valley Electric	West	25,000	Electric	February 2026	0.0	California Public Utilities Commission
California	PacifiCorp	West	46,000	Electric	February 2026	0.3	California Public Utilities Commission
California	Pacific Gas & Electric	West	16,000,000	Electric	March 2026	0.0	Halcyon
California	San Diego Gas & Electric	West	1,490,000	Electric	February 2026	0.0	California Public Utilities Commission
California	Southern California Edison	West	15,000,000	Electric	January 2026	0.1	California Public Utilities Commission
California	Southern California Edison	West	15,000,000	Electric	March 2026	1.9	California Public Utilities Commission
Georgia	Georgia Power	South	2,804,000	Electric	February 2026	0.9	Georgia Public Service Commission
Hawaii	Hawaiian Electric	West	1,330,000	Electric	March 2026	0.2	Honolulu Star Advertiser
Idaho	Avista	West	145,000	Electric	February 2026	0.0	Avista Utilities
Illinois	MidAmerican Energy	Midwest	85,000	Electric	March 2026	0.0	Illinois Commerce Commission

Electric and Gas Utility Rate Increases from the 1st Quarter, 2026

State	Utility	Region	# of Customers	Type	When Requested	Requested Rate Increase (Billion \$)*	Source
Indiana	CenterPoint Indiana	Midwest	154,000	Electric	February 2026	0.0	Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission
Kansas	Evergy Central	Midwest	736,000	Electric	March 2026	0.0	Kansas Corporation Commission
Kentucky	Kentucky Power	South	162,000	Electric	February 2026	0.1	Lexington Herald Leader
Louisiana	Entergy Louisiana	South	1,100,000	Electric	March 2026	0.1	Louisiana Public Service Commission
Maine	Central Maine Power	Northeast	670,000	Electric	February 2026	0.2	Maine Morning Star
Maryland	Baltimore Gas & Electric	South	1,300,000	Electric	February 2026	0.1	Maryland Public Service Commission
Massachusetts	Unitil	Northeast	16,000	Electric	February 2026	0.0	Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities
Michigan	Upper Peninsula Power Company	Midwest	52,000	Electric	March 2026	0.0	Michigan Public Service Commission
Missouri	Evergy Metro	Midwest	314,000	Electric	February 2026	0.1	Missouri Public Service Commission
Nevada	NV Energy	West	2,400,000	Electric	March 2026	0.0	Public Utilities Commission of Nevada

Electric and Gas Utility Rate Increases from the 1st Quarter, 2026

State	Utility	Region	# of Customers	Type	When Requested	Requested Rate Increase (Billion \$)*	Source
New Jersey	PSEG	Northeast	2,400,000	Electric	March 2026	0.0	New Jersey Board of Public Utilities
New Mexico	PNM	West	550,000	Electric	February 2026	0.1	Halcyon
Ohio	AEP Ohio	Midwest	1,530,000	Electric	January 2026	0.1	Public Utilities Commission of Ohio
Ohio	AES Ohio	Midwest	527,000	Electric	March 2026	0.1	Public Utilities Commission of Ohio
Ohio	Duke Energy Ohio	Midwest	840,000	Electric	January 2026	0.1	Public Utilities Commission of Ohio
Oklahoma	Public Service Company of Oklahoma	South	575,000	Electric	January 2026	0.6	Oklahoma Corporation Commission
Oregon	Idaho Power	West	660,000	Electric	February 2026	0.0	Oregon Public Utility Commission
Oregon	PacifiCorp	West	629,000	Electric	February 2026	0.0	Oregon Public Utility Commission
Oregon	Portland General Electric	West	963,000	Electric	February 2026	0.0	Oregon Public Utility Commission
Pennsylvania	PECO	Northeast	1,700,000	Electric	March 2026	0.4	PECO
South Carolina	Dominion	South	782,000	Electric	January 2026	0.3	South Carolina Public Service Commission

Electric and Gas Utility Rate Increases from the 1st Quarter, 2026

State	Utility	Region	# of Customers	Type	When Requested	Requested Rate Increase (Billion \$)*	Source
South Carolina	Duke Energy Carolinas	South	680,000	Electric	March 2026	0.1	South Carolina Public Service Commission
South Dakota	Black Hills Energy	Midwest	75,000	Electric	February 2026	0.1	Black Hills Corporation
Tennessee	Appalachian Power	South	49,000	Electric	February 2026	0.0	Tennessee Public Utility Commission
Texas	CenterPoint Houston	South	2,500,000	Electric	February 2026	0.2	Public Utility Commission of Texas
Vermont	Green Mountain Power	Northeast	275,000	Electric	January 2026	0.0	Vermont Public Utility Commission
Virginia	Dominion	South	2,700,000	Electric	March 2026	0.1	Virginia State Corporation Commission
Washington	Avista	West	403,000	Electric	January 2026	0.2	Avista Utilities
Washington	Puget Sound Energy	West	1,100,000	Electric	January 2026	1.2	Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission
West Virginia	Mon Power	South	395,000	Electric	February 2026	0.0	Halcyon
West Virginia	Appalachian and Wheeling Power	South	740,000	Electric	February 2026	0.1	WV Press
Wisconsin	Wisconsin Electric Power Company	Midwest	1,100,000	Electric	March 2026	0.0	Public Service Commission of Wisconsin

Electric and Gas Utility Rate Increases from the 1st Quarter, 2026

State	Utility	Region	# of Customers	Type	When Requested	Requested Rate Increase (Billion \$)*	Source
Wyoming	Black Hills Energy	West	45,000	Electric	March 2026	0.0	Halcyon
Arizona	Southwest Gas	West	1,153,000	Gas	February 2026	0.1	Arizona Corporation Commission
Colorado	Black Hills Energy	West	190,000	Gas	February 2026	0.0	Black Hills Energy
Illinois	Peoples Gas Light and Coke	Midwest	894,000	Gas	January 2026	0.2	Illinois Commerce Commission
Illinois	Nicor Gas	Midwest	2,300,000	Gas	January 2026	0.2	Illinois Commerce Commission
Illinois	North Shore Gas	Midwest	160,000	Gas	January 2026	0.0	Illinois Commerce Commission
Illinois	MidAmerican Energy	Midwest	65,000	Gas	March 2026	0.0	Illinois Commerce Commission
Kansas	Black Hills Energy	Midwest	116,000	Gas	March 2026	0.0	Kansas Corporation Commission
Kentucky	Louisville Gas & Electric	South	336,000	Gas	March 2026	0.0	Kentucky Public Service Commission
Maine	Unitil	Northeast	44,000	Gas	February 2026	0.0	Halcyon
Massachusetts	Eversource	Northeast	1,400,000	Gas	January 2026	0.0	Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities

Electric and Gas Utility Rate Increases from the 1st Quarter, 2026

State	Utility	Region	# of Customers	Type	When Requested	Requested Rate Increase (Billion \$)*	Source
Massachusetts	National Grid	Northeast	1,200,000	Gas	January 2026	0.3	Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities
Massachusetts	Unitil	Northeast	30,000	Gas	January 2026	0.0	Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities
Michigan	SEMCO	Midwest	305,000	Gas	February 2026	0.1	Michigan Public Service Commission
Nevada	Southwest Gas	West	803,000	Gas	March 2026	0.1	Public Utilities Commission of Nevada
North Carolina	Enbridge Gas	South	667,000	Gas	March 2026	0.1	North Carolina Utilities Commission
North Carolina	Piedmont Gas	South	817,000	Gas	February 2026	0.0	North Carolina Utilities Commission
North Dakota	Xcel Energy	Midwest	63,000	Gas	January 2026	0.0	Xcel Energy
Pennsylvania	UGI Utilities	Northeast	680,000	Gas	January 2026	0.1	Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission
Pennsylvania	National Fuel	Northeast	214,000	Gas	January 2026	0.0	Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission
Pennsylvania	PECO	Northeast	553,000	Gas	March 2026	0.1	PECO

Electric and Gas Utility Rate Increases from the 1st Quarter, 2026

State	Utility	Region	# of Customers	Type	When Requested	Requested Rate Increase (Billion \$)*	Source
Tennessee	Atmos Energy	South	161,000	Gas	January 2026	0.0	Tennessee Public Utility Commission
Virginia	Virginia Natural Gas	South	310,000	Gas	February 2026	0.0	Virginia State Corporation Commission
Washington	Avista	West	369,000	Gas	January 2026	0.0	Avista Utilities
Washington	Puget Sound Energy	West	900,000	Gas	January 2026	0.3	Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission
West Virginia	Mountaineer Gas	South	220,000	Gas	February 2026	0.0	WSAZ
Wisconsin	Wisconsin Gas	Midwest	1,100,000	Gas	March 2026	0.0	Public Service Commission of Wisconsin
Wyoming	Black Hills Power	West	133,000	Gas	January 2026	0.0	Halcyon

*Numbers may not equal \$9.4 billion due to rounding.

