



For Immediate Release: 2/16/2017

GOVERNOR ANDREW M. CUOMO

**GOVERNOR CUOMO ANNOUNCES EXPANSION OF FINANCIAL BENEFITS FOR
LOW-INCOME UTILITY CUSTOMERS**

***Expansion Adds \$12 Million to Energy Affordability Policy, Bringing Overall
Benefits to \$260 Million***

***Provides Nearly Two Million Low-Income New Yorkers with Direct Energy-Cost
Relief***

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today announced an expansion of the first-ever Energy Affordability Policy, which will provide nearly two million low-income New Yorkers with direct energy-cost relief each year. The expansion adds \$12 million to the initiative to allow 50,000 direct voucher and utility-guarantee customers to participate, bringing the total program benefits to \$260 million.

“By helping more low income customers access affordable energy, this program delivers much-needed relief to New Yorkers who often have trouble paying their bills to keep their lights and heat on,” **Governor Cuomo said.** “This is a major step in our efforts to ensure a cleaner and more resilient energy system for all New Yorkers.”

An order approved today by the Public Service Commission expanded upon Governor Cuomo’s Energy Affordability Policy by boosting program benefits from \$248 million to \$260 million. In addition, the Commission approved implementation plans for the major utilities operating in the State to increase the number of low-income households.

Under the new policy, depending on household income and presence of vulnerable residents, electric heating customers will receive monthly discounts up to \$76, up from a maximum of \$27 today. Gas heating customers will receive discounts up to \$67, up from a maximum of \$50 today. The budget will be capped at no more than 2 percent of utility revenues, a level found to be sufficient to meet the 6 percent energy burden goal for most utilities while balancing rate impacts on other classes of customers. A number of consumer advocacy groups fully supported expanding the number of low-income families being served.

This action builds on the policy announced last year by Governor Cuomo which limited energy costs for low-income New Yorkers to no more than approximately 6 percent of household income on average — half of what many New Yorkers are currently paying. The policy change resulted in increasing the number of low-income utility customers receiving monthly discounts from approximately 1.1 million customers to 1.7 million.

Governor Cuomo also directed a collaborative effort among state agencies, acting as a low-income energy task force, to develop new strategies so that all of the state's 2.3 million households at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level have greater access to clean energy and are better served by the state's energy efficiency and assistance programs. The inter-agency task force is currently developing data-sharing opportunities to identify and help low- and moderate-income families participate in this new effort.

Richard Kauffman, Chairman of Energy and Finance New York State, said, “We are building a clean, more resilient and affordable energy system by ensuring all New Yorkers will benefit from Reforming the Energy Vision. Under the Energy Affordability Policy, all New Yorkers will have access to more choice in how they get and use their electricity.”

Public Service Commission Chair Audrey Zibelman said, “We are taking this step to help the millions of New Yorkers who struggle every month to pay their electric or gas heating bills. Through a wide range of REV initiatives, New York can achieve lower energy bills for all customers, at all income levels. But direct assistance is needed for these low-income households where energy costs can account for 15 percent or more of a family's income.”

Michael Corso, the Department of Public Service's Consumer Advocate, said, “Governor Cuomo's Energy Affordability Policy is having a profound impact on the lives of millions of New Yorkers. I am thrilled that we are maximizing the benefits of our existing programs, improving them where necessary, and reaching even more low-income households in New York to make energy affordable.”

The Energy Affordability Policy is an important part of Reforming the Energy Vision, Governor Cuomo's comprehensive strategy to build a cleaner, more resilient and affordable energy system. Under Governor Cuomo, New York has become a leader in fighting climate change and growing New York's economy by investing in clean energy technology and generating 50 percent of the state's electricity needs from renewable energy by 2030. Reducing the energy burden of low-income households and ensuring their participation in the clean economy cannot be accomplished through rate discounts alone, and requires a more comprehensive strategy. Under REV and other initiatives, several significant low- and moderate-income level energy reforms are underway.

The increase in direct financial assistance adds to the more than \$750 million in annual energy investments currently made by the state on behalf of low-income New Yorkers. Utility discounts for low-income customers currently total \$133 million per year.

U.S. Energy Information Administration data shows that middle- and upper-income customer energy burdens generally range from 1 to 5 percent of household income. While the Energy Affordability Policy ensures that low-income households on average do not pay more than 6 percent of their household income for energy, the Commission noted that it will seek to leverage assistance provided through other REV programs, including energy efficiency and clean energy programs to further lower the energy burden of low-income households below 6 percent so that the low-income energy burden is similar to middle-income households.

About Reforming the Energy Vision

Reforming the Energy Vision is Governor Andrew M. Cuomo's strategy to lead on climate change and grow New York's economy. REV is building a cleaner, more resilient and affordable energy system for all New Yorkers by stimulating investment in clean technologies like solar, wind, and energy efficiency and generating 50 percent of the state's electricity needs from renewable energy by 2030. Already, REV has driven 730 percent growth in the statewide solar market, enabled over 105,000 low-income households to permanently cut their energy bills with energy efficiency, and created thousands of jobs in manufacturing, engineering, and other clean tech sectors. REV is ensuring New York State reduces statewide greenhouse gas emissions 40 percent by 2030 and achieves the internationally-recognized target of reducing emissions 80 percent by 2050. To learn more about REV, including the Governor's \$5 billion investment in clean energy technology and innovation, please visit www.ny.gov/REV4NY and follow us at @Rev4NY.

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