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Welcome To Ohio
From the desk of Rep. McNally

Ohioans need relief from scorching utility bills

The weather is heating up and so are parents, well at least this parent, every time a kid leaves the door open and lets all the cool air out. Like me, you might be wondering how long you can last before turning on your air conditioner. Money doesn't grow on trees and that electric bill isn't paying for itself.

Utilities are a necessity and their continually rising costs are a very serious concern. This June, those costs are going up again. As a result of the energy auction that occurred in March, our electric bills might be going up [anywhere from 14-32%](#) starting June 1. Now is the time to review your price-to-compare (PTC) on your utility bill.

Utilities bills can be confusing. Knowing how utilities charge, understanding each and every fee, and shopping for a better price can be overwhelming. Taking on that accounting work is why the Public Utility Commission of Ohio (PUCO), the state entity that oversees the energy auction and approves rate increases, exists.

But why are our bills going up for a second time in two years? Because Ohioans are still footing the bill for a \$61M FirstEnergy bribery scandal.

The PUCO five commissioners, who are appointed by the Governor with advice and consent from the Ohio Senate, regulate utility rates. Commissioners should not be employed by or have a financial interest in a public utility, especially the Chairperson who holds significant power over investor-owned utilities and also becomes chair of the Ohio Power Siting Board, which approves new electric generating facilities.

But Governor DeWine did appoint someone to the PUCO who took [\\$4.3M in bribes from FirstEnergy](#). DeWine did it [despite warnings from his own aides](#). DeWine and his Lt. Governor Jon Husted [worked to make him Chair](#) of the PUCO [days later](#).

What did they get in exchange? Husted's dark money group got [\\$1M from FirstEnergy](#) while [\\$4M in contributions](#) went to dark money groups helping DeWine. The dark money group for the Ohio Senate President that confirmed the appointment in only two days, Matt Huffman, [received \\$1.4M from FirstEnergy](#).

What did we get in this deal? House Bill (HB) 6 and a scandal deemed by U.S. Attorney David M. DeVillers as "likely the largest bribery, money laundering scheme ever perpetrated against the people of the state of Ohio." And now, the PUCO is allowing FirstEnergy to increase rates without a full accounting. The utility [refuses to let the public see internal investigations into the \\$61M in bribes](#) they paid to make HB 6 happen.

This is wrong. Ohioans deserve transparency and utility cost relief.

I introduced [HB 444](#) to ensure Ohio ratepayers are not burdened with these bribes or political costs. HB 444 requires robust disclosure of political spending and enacts substantial penalties should a utility violate the law. It won't solve all of the problems that come with the complexity of utility billing or utility regulating, but it will prevent future harm and improve consumer and political transparency. We know consumers would never agree to pay for this, and they shouldn't have to.

HB 444 should become law and should have bipartisan support. Instead, my GOP colleagues have called it [silly and excessive](#). What's excessive is asking Ohioans to pay [\\$500,000 a day](#), over one-billion dollars, through increased electric bills and fee hikes and offering no solutions to it or to HB 6. When my neighbor is watching the evening news with his AC turned off in 80 degree weather just to save a buck, and he's hearing about how the money for these pay-to-play bribes is coming from his sweat-drenched pockets, you better believe he is mad as hell. The GOP is emboldening these utilities while ignoring the needs of working families.

[FirstEnergy investors now want to depose the Governor](#) and [Lt. Governor](#) in their lawsuit over the HB 6 scandal. While federal and state investigations, on top of civil litigation, will in time pull the curtain back on all the players and beneficiaries of this scheme, it won't right the wrong done to Ohioans or prevent the next scandal. We need H.B. 444, we need utility cost relief, and we need it now.

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