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Contact: David Springe, executive director, NASUCA
David.springe@nasuca.org or (785) 550-7606
Contact: Lanny Zieman, president-elect, NASUCA
lanny.zieman@oca.iowa.gov or (515) 725-7200

Utility Consumer Advocates: Stronger Safeguards Needed On Customer Shutoffs as Extreme Weather Events Multiply

Affordability is Job One as NASUCA Meets, Elects 2027 Leadership

NEW ORLEANS – States across the country need to tackle energy affordability and adopt strong safeguards for customers who face shutoffs during more frequent extreme weather events, utility consumer advocates said this week.

Utility consumer advocates from across the country are poised to tackle unaffordable energy bills, press Big Tech to pay its way for data centers and expand protections for utility customers struggling to make ends meet.

At their annual conference, the advocates also elected new leadership, discussed current federal and state regulatory challenges amid surging demand for electricity, and received training from experts at Lawrence Berkeley National Energy Laboratory on best practices for achieving energy affordability going forward.

The National Association of State Utility Consumer Advocates, or NASUCA, has been the indispensable voice of utility customers and their state advocates for more than 47 years.

“NASUCA’s been around for decades, but we are in a moment where the public’s attention is more focused on utility costs and making them affordable,” said Lanny Zieman, Consumer Advocate within the Iowa Attorney General’s Office and NASUCA President-Elect. “NASUCA is ready to meet this moment.”

Tackling Shutoffs as Extreme Weather Events Multiply

In light of new challenges facing utility customers during more frequent extreme weather events, NASUCA adopted a resolution urging states to enhance or establish policies to suspend the shutoff of electric, gas, water, and wastewater service when weather and conditions may result in significant harm to the health, safety, and resilience of utility customers.

The resolution, developed by the organization's Consumer Protection Committee, urged states and utility commissions consider the following safeguards:

- Suspending shutoffs during specified calendar dates corresponding to periods of known cold or hot temperatures or high heat index;
- Suspending shutoff of electric, gas, water, and wastewater service to homes on the day of and day after the forecasted temperature is at or below a specified cold threshold, or the forecasted heat index is at or above a specified heat index threshold;
- Suspending the disconnection of utility service during periods of poor air quality based on the Air Quality Index (AQI);
- Protecting households immediately by extending these emergency disconnection suspensions to customers and households without additional procedural barriers such as requiring the enrollment into specific programs;
- Automatically reconnecting previously disconnected customers during one of the aforementioned suspension periods; and
- Waiving security deposits for new applicants and accounts who have been disconnected and would normally need to pay another security deposit to be reconnected.

Resolution 2026-03 can be found at https://www.nasuca.org/event/2026-nasuca-annual-meeting/ along with presentations from the NASUCA meeting.

"The Consumer Protection Committee and leaders from NASUCA offices dug in to develop detailed recommendations for extreme weather, and it's the organization's hope that all PUCs implement protections relevant to their states," said Heather Sanborn, Maine Public Advocate and NASUCA Vice President-Elect. "We also plan to share the resolution with the trade association for utility commissions, NARUC, for review by its Committee on Consumers, Affordability and the Public Interest."

Electing 2027 Leadership for NASUCA

NASUCA members elected Zieman its president and Sanborn its vice president for 2027 during the Annual Meeting. Officers re-elected for another term are treasurer Anthony Ornelas, administrator of the Wyoming Office of the Consumer Advocate, and secretary Karen Stachowski, Tennessee Deputy Attorney General.

Zieman replaces Michael Moody, who has led NASUCA as its president for the past three years. Moody, division chief of the Special Litigation Unit in the Michigan Office of Attorney General, and former vice president Tom Content, executive director of the Citizens Utility Board of Wisconsin, will remain on the organization's 11-person executive committee, with Moody serving as past president/ex-officio member.

"We appreciate Michael's strong leadership over the past three years," said David Springe, NASUCA executive director. "He has been vocal and active in representing the public interest and consumers' voice around the country, whether at industry conferences or at regular meetings

of the North American Electricity Reliability Council. And he did that while advocating for Michiganders at the Public Service Commission and in the federal courts challenging the Trump Administration's 202(c) emergency orders."

Remaining members of the executive committee are: Michele Beck (Utah); David Lapp (Maryland); Claire Coleman (Connecticut); Maureen Willis (Ohio); Michael Angelo (Hawaii); and Joe Pereira (Colorado). Stepping off the EC after three years as president and three years as immediate past president is Chris Ayers (North Carolina).

"In recent years, NASUCA has upped its game by expanding its staff, and increased its profile by being in conversations about affordability and the public interest wherever they are happening," said Moody. "I'm confident NASUCA staff and the leadership of Lanny Zieman and Heather Sanborn will enable consumer advocates' voices to resonate in the year ahead."

NASUCA is the essential voice of utility consumers, representing and supporting utility consumer advocates in their efforts to achieve safe, reliable and reasonably priced utility services. Learn more: NASUCA provides resources for consumer advocates, as well as the public, available on its website, www.nasuca.org.

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NASUCA is a voluntary association of 63 consumer advocate offices in 45 states, the District of Columbia, Jamaica, Puerto Rico and Barbados, with Associate and Affiliate members that also represent utility consumer interests. NASUCA's members are designated by the laws of their respective jurisdictions to represent the interests of utility consumers before state and federal regulators and in the courts. For more information, please see http://nasuca.org/.