THE LIVE WIRE

June 2026

Save these Dates!

PMEA 2026 Annual Conference – September 9 – 11, 2026
Omni Bedford Springs, Bedford

PMEA Business Workshop
– September 9, 2026 @ Omni Bedford Springs, Bedford

2026 Training for Line Crews
Registration opens prior to each class

Underground Troubleshooting & Grounding
September 14 & 15 – Grove City
September 21 & 22 – Chambersburg
September 23 & 24 - Lansdale

Safety for Lineworkers
October 22 & 23 – Grove City
October 26 & 27 – Chambersburg
October 28 & 29 – Lansdale

Register Soon for the PMEA Annual Business Workshop & Annual Conference

Mark your calendars — the Annual Business Workshop and Annual Conference returns September 9–11 to the beautiful Omni Bedford Springs. Whether you are a manager, superintendent, or elected official, this is one event you simply cannot afford to miss. With a packed agenda covering the issues that matter most to our public power communities, this year's conference delivers the insights, connections, and practical tools you need heading into the next year.

This year's conference promises an exceptional lineup designed to inform, connect, and energize public power communities across Pennsylvania. Highlights include:

- **A special session on joint generation projects**, exploring the potential opportunities and pathways for collaborative power development.
- **A forward-looking energy outlook session**, examining what the future of energy means for municipal utilities.
- **Market pricing and expectations**, with expert perspectives on where rates and wholesale markets are headed.
- **Remarks from national leaders Corwin and Thompson**, who will share the current landscape for public power and what lies ahead at the federal level.

The Business Workshop offers practical, hands-on sessions tailored for all levels of utility operations, covering:

- Legal aspects of municipal electric utilities
- Making sense of utility finances — projects, rates, and safeguards
- The good, bad, and ugly of AMI
- AI applications for utility finance — a practical look at real-world tools

The full agenda will be available soon. In the meantime, registration and hotel reservation information can be obtained by contacting PMEA at bosak@papublicpower.org.

FERC Approves PJM Fast-Track Review for 'Shovel-Ready' Projects

The fast-track interconnection plan is part of a series of efforts by PJM to bring more generation online quickly to meet what it says is a tightening power supply situation as growing data center demand is outstripping available electricity supplies.

To be eligible, projects must be backed by a pledge from a state's "primary siting authority" that it supports expediting the project so it can come online within three years. A state's governor can be considered a primary siting authority under the plan.

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Fast Track Projects *(continued)*

PJM expects it will take about 10 months between the filing of an expedited interconnection request and issuing a generation interconnection agreement.

PJM's plan faced significant challenges at FERC, with protests filed by clean energy trade groups, the Illinois Commerce Commission, LS Power, the New Jersey Bureau of Public Utilities, Vistra, community organizations, and others.

In its decision, FERC rejected Vistra's concerns that proposed "readiness" requirements would discriminate in favor of load-serving entities, such as utilities.

"The requirements we accept here are designed to attract 'shovel-ready' projects that have the highest probability of successfully proceeding through this limited interconnection process, regardless of whether they are proposed by an independent power producer or affiliated with an LSE," FERC said.

FERC also dismissed as "speculative" concerns that the expedited process could delay PJM's regular interconnection review process and that the expedited projects will take up headroom on the grid, leaving other interconnection customers with higher network upgrade costs.

In a concurring statement, FERC Commissioner David Rosner said state efforts are required to build generation.

"Given states' siting authority over generation and transmission, public utility commissioners, governors' offices, and state legislatures are all necessary partners in ensuring that energy infrastructure is built at the pace needed to stay ahead of demand and keep energy affordable and reliable for PJM customers," Rosner said.

PJM could announce the first ten projects selected through the expedited process in October, two months before it conducts its base capacity auction for the 2029/30 delivery year, ClearView Energy Partners said in a note on Wednesday.

FERC's approval of PJM's expedited interconnection track creates a pathway for bringing shovel-ready generation projects "of any kind" onto the grid quickly, according to David Mills, PJM president and CEO.

"PJM is taking action to accelerate the interconnection process, and this approval is another important step forward," Mills said in a statement. "The expedited interconnection track also creates a clear opportunity for states to advance projects that are critical to reliability and economic growth by supporting them through the siting, permitting, and development process."

Source: Ethan Howland, Senior Reporter, Utility Dive, June 10, 2026.

PA Activists Urge Lawmakers to Curb Soaring Electric Bills

Advocates for lower electricity prices in Pennsylvania said their goals can be achieved by requiring large-load users like data centers to supply their own power rather than taking it from the grid, by reducing utility profits and by speeding up the interconnection of new clean-energy projects.

The group, including the Natural Resources Defense Council, Pennsylvania Utility Law Project, the Evergreen Collaborative and state Rep. Elizabeth Fiedler, touted a report showing that consumers in the state could save an average of more than $840 a year on electricity costs by 2030 vs. the status quo if lawmakers enact policies that address the causes of soaring retail power prices.

The report, from Synapse Energy Economics, an environmental consulting firm based in Cambridge, Massachusetts, said the proposed policy reforms could reduce household electricity costs by an average of $197 in 2027 alone and deliver an estimated $2.4 billion in cost savings statewide by 2030.

Some consumers are now having to choose between paying for their electricity and their medication, and that is not a choice they should have to make, said Fiedler, a Democrat who chairs the House Energy Committee and represents part of South Philadelphia. Residential electricity rates in Pennsylvania rose almost 14 percent in the past year alone, according to federal data. Costs for consumers were up more than 50 percent compared to 2020.

Fiedler urged lawmakers to enact reforms that lower electricity prices to levels that everyone can afford. The legislature faces a June 30 deadline for finalizing the fiscal 2027 state budget.

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Soaring Electric Bills *(continued)*

"Often in this building, especially during budget season, we are facing numbers that lead us to a place where we believe we must cut policies and programs that people count on," Fiedler said at a press conference on the steps of the state Capitol in Harrisburg on Wednesday. "This report shows us the tremendous amounts of money that people can keep in their pockets."

Fiedler and the advocates said the energy-hungry data center industry—which plans to build more than fifty of the giant computer complexes in Pennsylvania—has driven up retail power prices by increasing demand to the point that it exceeds new supply.

Fiedler urged support for HB2224, the Return on Equity bill she co-sponsored, that would ease consumer costs by lowering the profit margins of state-regulated utilities.

Patrick Cicero, an attorney with the Pennsylvania Utility Law Project, said investors would still be attracted to utilities even if the return was reduced.

"A significant share of a utility bill isn't paying for power or pipes, it's paying for a utility's shareholder profit," said Cicero, whose group works to ensure that low-income residents receive safe and affordable utility service.

The latest projected power demand from data centers would be the equivalent of adding two-and-a-half times the electricity currently used by New York City to the service territory for the eastern and central Pennsylvania utility PPL within the next decade, according to Jackson Morris, an analyst with the Natural Resources Defense Council, who spoke at the press conference.

State-by-state figures from monthly utility bill data show, on average, American households paid roughly $110, or 6.4%, more for electricity in 2025, compared to 2024. (Photo by Alexander Castro/Rhode Island Current)

"The rapid rise in data centers and expected future growth are unique, unprecedented and uncertain, and will require a different approach than simply asserting that basic market forces of supply and demand will take care of it," he said.

But Dan Diorio, vice president of state policy for the Data Center Coalition, a trade group, denied that the industry causes retail electric prices to rise.

"Studies…have consistently found that data centers do not raise energy prices, and that data centers pay for all the power they use, just like any other customer," Dorio said in a statement. "In fact, research shows that large-load users like data centers can actually keep costs down for residential customers by absorbing more of the grid's fixed costs." A recent study that reached this conclusion was funded by the Data Center Coalition.

Advocates for action to curb rising electricity prices also accused the grid operator PJM Interconnection of "mismanagement" by being slow to approve new energy sources, especially from clean energy like wind and solar, that might address the supply shortfall.

Jeff Shields, a spokesman for PJM, said many delays were beyond its control. "We need to build generation at a faster pace to keep up with rising demand driven by data centers, and PJM is doing everything in its power to make that happen," Shields said in an email.

The grid operator, whose Northeast and mid-Atlantic territory covers around 65 million people, has fifty gigawatts of generation that have cleared its interconnection process but continue to face delays from forces outside of PJM's control, including those in state permitting.

This week, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission approved PJM's proposal for an expedited interconnection track for large state-sponsored generation projects of any fuel type or technology that can come online quickly, and address the imbalance between supply and demand, Shields said.

"PJM continues to work closely with state and federal governments on multiple paths to bring new generation online quickly including a plan for new data centers to bring their own generation," he said. The plan also includes an agreement by data centers to be curtailed if and when the system needs power for residential customers, he added.

In Pennsylvania, developers who want access to the state's "Fast Track" permitting program must bring their own power, a condition demanded by Gov. Josh Shapiro, a Democrat. Shapiro, who has faced frustration from some of the residents fighting data-center development, said in a statement that a price cap he negotiated with PJM saved consumers across the region billions of dollars and his new data-center standards are designed to protect communities and ensure that developers deliver real benefits "if they want the Commonwealth's support."

Source: Jon Hurdle, Inside Climate News, June 12, 2026.

Participation in PMEA Surveys

Your participation in surveys and responses to member inquiries is essential. To effectively assess the needs and challenges facing our membership, we rely on broad and thoughtful input from all members. While we strive to limit the number of requests we send, emerging issues and evolving circumstances often create the need for timely information and data that cannot always be anticipated. Your feedback helps strengthen our advocacy and support efforts — please help us help you.

Key Points from FERC's Data Center Interconnection Decision

The pathway for adding data centers to the U.S. transmission system became clearer last week when the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission found that major grid operators' rules for large load interconnections were inadequate.

"We take historic action to push our country's electric markets and economy into the future," FERC Chairman Laura Swett said alongside six orders the agency issued Thursday.

FERC's decision was driven by a massive wave of data center development that began roughly two years ago, ending years of flat electric demand growth. In October, the U.S. Department of Energy directed FERC to establish data center interconnection rules — a process that drew more than 3,500 pages of public comments and was completed in about eight months. Orders were issued to six regional grid operators: CAISO, ISO-NE, MISO, NYISO, PJM, and SPP.

Here are the six key takeaways:

1. FERC Opts for a Regional Approach
Rather than a single national standard, FERC directed each RTO and ISO to develop interconnection rules tailored to their specific needs. "The era of one national standard for data center interconnection is over before it began," said Mona Dajani of Cooley. Critics noted that about a third of Americans live outside RTOs and will lack the same cost and transparency protections, though FERC encouraged non-RTO transmission owners to voluntarily propose similar rules.

2. FERC 'Stays in Its Lane'
FERC carefully avoided conflicts over federal and state jurisdiction — a key concern when the DOE first issued its directive. The agency explicitly stated it would not intrude on states' authority over retail service, siting decisions, or which entities may sell electricity to large load customers. "Fast and durable action is easier when litigation risks are reduced," noted Grid Strategies COO Gretchen Kershaw.

3. Protecting Ratepayers from Cost Shifts
FERC expressed concern over a lack of transparency in how network upgrade costs are assigned. The agency directed RTOs and ISOs to establish "cost recovery agreements" ensuring large load customers bear the financial risk for transmission upgrades required to serve them, and to publish clear, searchable data on network upgrade costs.

4. Options for Flexible Loads
FERC recognized that data centers can operate more flexibly than traditional loads and directed grid operators to develop new transmission services for loads willing to curtail usage under certain conditions. "The ability to curtail or operate flexibly could become one of the most valuable tools for getting new projects connected faster," said Robert Montejo of Duane Morris.

5. FERC Calls for Alternative Transmission Technology Evaluations
Grid operators must now consider alternative transmission technologies — such as advanced conductors, dynamic line ratings, and advanced power flow control devices — before defaulting to costly traditional network upgrades. If traditional upgrades are chosen, operators must explain why alternatives were ruled out.

6. Reform Timeline Could Be Challenging
FERC gave RTOs and ISOs 60 days to respond, with possible 90-day extensions. Experts warn the timeline is "really aggressive" and may produce cursory reports rather than detailed reform proposals. FERC Commissioner David LaCerte made clear the agency will dictate solutions if responses are inadequate: "This is an outcome we are prepared to pursue given the gravity of the moment."

Source: Ethan Howland, Senior Reporter, Utility Dive, June 22, 2026.

PA House Passes $1.7B Tax Cut on Electricity, Reins in Utility Company Profits

State lawmakers want to put a cap on how much utility companies can profit from customers, while giving Pennsylvanians a tax cut on electricity. Some have called the proposed cut the largest in state history.

The House unanimously passed a measure Monday that would establish a formula for a "reasonable return" on utility company investments in infrastructure and eliminate nearly $1.7 billion in taxes that electricity companies now pass along to consumers as part of their bills.

The legislation's prime sponsor, House Energy Committee Chairperson Elizabeth Fiedler (D-Philadelphia), said House Bill 2224 is intended to help Pennsylvanians who are working multiple jobs to make ends meet and seniors forced to decide between medication or cooling their homes.

"For each of these people, we are making a decision today to help lower their utility bills," she said.

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PA Legislative Action *(continued)*

State and federal policymakers have grappled with sharply rising energy costs as the nation faces an unprecedented forecast for greater electricity demand, driven largely by data centers and increased electrification of industry and transportation. In some parts of the commonwealth, electricity prices have jumped by up to 20% over the last two years.

But regulators and lawmakers have also eyed utilities' requests to increase the amount they charge customers for delivering their services. Two major Pennsylvania utilities in the last year have requested to hike their rates by hundreds of millions of dollars.

"We hear over and over that utilities have to jack up our rates, the bills we pay, just to provide us with safe and reliable service, but we know that's not true," the bill's prime sponsor, House Energy Committee Chairperson Elizabeth Fiedler (D-Philadelphia), said during debate on the chamber floor Monday.

"We know utility companies are compensated dollar for dollar for both the wages and the materials they need to do infrastructure upgrades and to pay the people who do that important work," she said.

Under the Public Utilities Code, investor-owned utilities are permitted to charge rates that allow them to collect a "reasonable return" on their investments. The law, however, does not define reasonable.

According to the fiscal note on H.B. 2224, the bill establishes a default return on equity (ROE) at "the 10-year U.S. Treasury bond yield plus two percentage points." It also establishes a competitive equity auction process, similar to the auctions PJM uses to establish electricity prices, as an alternative to the formula.

A utility that objects to the formula-based ROE may use the auction system to "let lenders openly bid and establish the absolute minimum return required by the market."

The proposal would also eliminate the state's nearly 6% gross receipts tax on electricity, requiring utility companies to pass on the reduction to consumers. The chamber passed Rep. Carl Metzgar's (R-Somerset) amendment June 17 to cut the tax to zero in a 196-6 vote.

House Republicans called that the largest tax cut in Pennsylvania history.

"Our constituents need relief, and we have advocated, as the House Republican caucus, that the number one way to address the affordability crisis is to ensure that people have more of their hard-earned dollars in their pockets, their wallets, their pocketbooks," House Minority Leader Jesse Topper (R-Bedford) said.

Some Republicans were critical of the bill capping utility profits, saying it would result in greater costs being passed to consumers and prevent investment in the commonwealth's electricity infrastructure.

"While this bill defies some free market principles, which ultimately I believe lower the cost for consumers, we need to step in now, and this is about affordability and accountability for our consumers," Rep. Valerie Gaydos (R-Allegheny) said.

The measure now goes to the Senate for consideration amid negotiations over the commonwealth's next budget. The General Assembly's deadline to pass the budget is June 30.

While the House passed its version of Gov. Josh Shapiro's $53.3 billion spending plan in April, the Republican-led Senate has yet to respond with its counter proposal.

Shapiro has also taken action to rein in electricity costs, suing PJM to cap the maximum price in its auctions for generators to keep power plants on standby to meet peaks in demand.

His administration also intervened directly, persuading Philadelphia-area gas and electricity utility PECO Energy to withdraw a request to increase rates by $510 million a year. That would have increased some customers' bills by more than $34 a month, according to the governor's office.

Last year PPL Electric asked the PUC for approval to charge customers $356.3 million more annually. The increase would have resulted in a 7% larger bill for an average residential customer.

The PUC earlier this month approved a settlement in PPL's rate case that provides a $275 million in additional revenue, or about a 4.9% increase for customers.

In addition to eliminating the gross receipts tax on electricity, the bill establishes fines of $1,000 to $5,000 for utilities that do not pass the savings to consumers. And it prevents water and sewer utilities from pursuing payment for unbilled after more than 12 months have passed.

Source: Peter Hall, Pennsylvania Capital-Star, June 23, 2026.

PJM Videos Available

PMEA's annual 2025 Business Workshop included an essential session on PJM, giving attendees a comprehensive look at how PJM operates and its critical role in managing the regional power grid. Click here to view on PMEA's private YouTube channel.

PMEA's Public Power Governance 101 educational video is available exclusively to member municipalities. Designed for elected officials and staff across Pennsylvania's 35 public power communities, this module delivers insights into the management and operation of municipal electric systems. To receive a viewing link, contact Diane Bosak at bosak@papublicpower.org.

Share Your News….

Please share with us your exciting new projects, photos, personnel updates, and any other news! Your submissions should be sent to **bosak@papublicpower.org** at any time and they will be used in upcoming editions. We also welcome your suggestions for topics of interest for our newsletters.

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