

The electric grid is undergoing a critical transformation, but the communities hosting its infrastructure and the customers who fund it are often excluded from vital decision-making processes. Intervenor compensation programs provide crucial financial support, allowing consumer advocates, community members and other stakeholders to actively participate in complex public utility decisions. Without this support, only those with deep pockets get a seat at the table — creating a disadvantage for consumers.

The need for genuine community engagement

Energy decisions profoundly impact communities, yet the process is often **opaque and inaccessible**. Vital concerns—like who benefits, who pays and how bills are affected by new energy infrastructure—are frequently resolved in **complex**, **closed-door regulatory proceedings**. This leaves many feeling voiceless in choices that directly shape their lives.

To build a **more equitable and affordable energy future**, customers need three things:

- Transparent information on their monthly bills.
- Tools to manage usage and costs.
- Meaningful opportunities to communicate directly with utilities and decision-makers.

"An equitable energy future demands that communities have clear information, practical tools, and a meaningful voice in the decisions that shape their power and their lives." – Jolette Westbrook, Director & Senior Attorney, Regulatory Solutions, Environmental Defense Fund

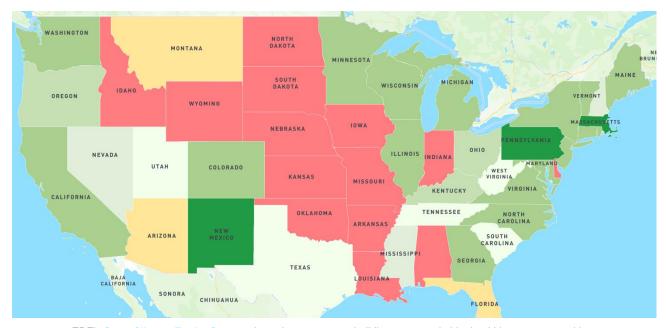
Ensuring every voice shapes our energy future

Intervenor compensation programs are crucial because they **democratize energy decisions**, helping ensure all voices, not just those with substantial financial resources, can shape our energy future. These efforts foster **transparency and fairness**, holding powerful utilities accountable and driving outcomes that truly benefit communities and the environment.

Effective intervenor compensation programs:

- Facilitate the inclusion of community members, environmental advocates and consumer groups in critical energy discussions.
- Encourage external scrutiny of proposals and plans in energy proceedings.
- Help shape energy decisions that are fair, just, and beneficial for all consumers, especially vulnerable community members.

The 2023 report <u>Overly Impacted and Rarely Heard</u> discusses how and why community voices are important for energy regulatory processes.



EDF's State Climate Equity Survey shows how states are building more equitable, healthier energy transitions

Progress and pitfalls of the current landscape

While <u>nearly 20 states</u> authorize intervenor compensation, **implementation varies widely**. Key areas for improvement include:

- Addressing wide variations in eligibility criteria, funding caps, ease of application and allowable expenses across states.
- Ensuring information about these programs is readily available and easy to understand.
- Providing sufficient resources to support meaningful public participation.
- Designing programs that encourage and support participation from all communities.

Intervenor compensation programs have had some success. In New York, multi-year advocacy fueled the <u>Build Public Renewables Act</u>, aiming for more affordable, publicly owned renewable energy. **California** has <u>already awarded \$3.5 million</u> across 40 claims to 14 intervenors this year alone.

Making public participation count

Intervenor compensation programs empower community voices and consumer advocates. They fund public participation in regulatory cases, prompting regulators to incorporate crucial, diverse perspectives. To be truly effective, these programs must be transparent, accessible, well-funded, and inclusive.

Utilities should also proactively engage customers, offering support like energy coaching or weatherization grants. Ultimately, providing communities a real voice in energy decisions through both intervenor compensation and robust consumer education is essential for an equitable and affordable energy future.

- Expanding and strengthening intervenor compensation nationwide.
- Urging utilities and regulators to actively engage customers with clear communication and supportive resources.
- Ensuring informed communities lead sound energy decisions that benefit their lives.

Visit <u>CommunityVoicesinEnergy</u>.org to learn how you can play a vital role. Sign up to get involved and join the conversation.