

New England consumers may see \$234 million in refunds after federal ruling over electricity prices



New England consumers could see \$234 million in refunds following a federal judge's ruling that found the amounts electric transmission companies charged to ratepayers for infrastructure investments is too high, Massachusetts Attorney General Maura Healey announced Friday. (Toby Talbot / Associated Press file) (Toby Talbot)

By **Shannon Young** | syoung@repub.com



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SPRINGFIELD – New England consumers could see \$234 million in refunds following a federal judge's ruling that found the amounts electric transmission companies charged to ratepayers for infrastructure investments is too high, Massachusetts Attorney General [Maura Healey](#) announced Friday.

Administrative Law Judge Steve Sterner's ruling, which would reduce the return on equity transmission companies are can earn on their investments from 2013 to 2015, is the result of ongoing litigation before the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, according to the AG's office.

Although the commission must still approve the decision, Healey praised the ruling, saying she's pleased the judge agreed "that the profits electric transmission companies and their investors are earning at the expense of ratepayers is too high."

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"If FERC agrees, New England ratepayers will be refunded hundreds of millions of dollars and will save millions more going forward," she said in a statement.

While transmission companies can recover transmission line construction costs plus a profit, FERC, based on the AG's 2011 initial complaint, reduced transmission owners' allowed profits in 2014 -- an order that resulted in a one-time refund of \$78 million to New England customers, according to Healey's office.

Sterner's decision would further reduce the allowed profits for rates that were in effect between January 2013 and April 2014, resulting in a \$234 million refund if affirmed. Massachusetts, Healey's office said, would see about \$106 million of the refund dollars, as it pays for about half of the New England region's transmission costs.

The Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities, Massachusetts Municipal Wholesale Electric Company, the Connecticut Public Utilities Regulatory Authority, the Connecticut Office of Consumer Counsel, Connecticut AG George Jepsen and several others also joined in the complaints and in pursuing customer refunds.

Assistant Attorney General Rebecca L. Tepper, chief of Healey's Energy and Telecommunications Division, and Assistant Attorney General Donald W. Boecke, also of the AG's Energy and Telecommunications Division, are handling the case along with assistance from the Connecticut AG's office and others.

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