

Promoting Equitable Participation in the Regulatory Process and Siting

House Bill No. 7890 and Senate Bill No. 2727

Intervenor Support Program

Encourages and funds equitable participation in public utility regulation and energy facility siting especially for vulnerable communities.



- Funding for the compensation of lawyers, expert witnesses, and other reasonable costs for intervenors wanting to participate.
- Clear process to provide upfront grants to cover up to \$50,000 per proceeding towards intervention, with a total annual program cap of \$300,000.
- Commission and Siting Board proceedings will benefit from more diverse perspectives, including those who will be directly impacted by proposals.

What is an intervenor?

In the 2026 Rhode Island legislative session, Acadia Center, in partnership with the Conservation Law Foundation, is advancing legislation to establish an intervenor support program. The aim of this program is to ensure a more diverse set of stakeholder perspectives at the proceedings of the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) and the Energy Facility Siting Board (EFSB).

An **intervenor** means a person or organization with an interest in the outcome of a proceeding that has been allowed to formally participate in a proceeding at the PUC or EFSB. Formal participation can involve presenting evidence and witnesses or filing relevant motions or petitions.

An **intervenor support program** provides funding for an intervenor for whom the cost to participate is too high. It encourages the participation of groups or individuals that have a stake in the public utility regulation process.

What's at stake

The Public Utilities Commission (PUC) is tasked with regulating monopolies such as Rhode Island Energy and determining the balance between sufficient infrastructure and just and reasonable rates. The Energy Facility Siting Board (EFSB) controls the siting of major energy facilities in the state.

Resource imbalance

Utilities have the resources, attorneys, and technical knowledge to participate in regulatory proceedings, and can use customer revenue to finance this participation. Other interested

stakeholders may not have the resources to participate in the regulatory process. This leads to significant information and resource asymmetry between utilities and consumers, often resulting in the interests of utilities not always aligning with the public interest.

Equitable participation

An intervenor support program aims to introduce new voices into the regulatory process – groups such as environmental justice communities or others disproportionately impacted by high energy burden but who lack the resources to participate in select proceedings. These intervenors can, among other steps, push back on excessive utility spending, propose robust alternatives, pursue cost savings for ratepayers, and advocate for other ratepayer interests. To enable participation, the Rhode Island program is structured as an upfront grant and the PUC and EFSB are required to conduct education and outreach.

Precedent and impact

There are more than 15 intervenor support programs across the country, including in Connecticut, Maine, New York and Massachusetts. California’s well-established intervenor compensation program saw a \$10 return for ratepayers for every \$1 invested in the program.

The existence of intervenor support programs is now an equity metric of an annual Energy Efficiency Scorecard, recognizing the importance of giving communities a voice when faced with rising utility costs.

In Rhode Island, some intervenors, despite significant resource obstacles, have been effective in securing bill credits for low-income customers or in opposing a fossil fuel facility in South Providence.

“Our constituents clamor for us to do something about utility affordability. We can do something by helping intervenors participate in the formal, legal proceedings of the PUC and EFSB.”

—Representative Jennifer Stewart, upon introduction of House Bill 7890
before the House Committee on Corporations on April 28, 2026
(20:17, <https://capitolvri.cablecast.tv/show/12069>)

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