Bill No.: SB-469
Title: AN ACT REQUIRING THE PUBLIC UTILITIES REGULATORY AUTHORITY TO ESTABLISH PERFORMANCE STANDARDS AND MINIMUM STAFFING AND EQUIPMENT LEVELS FOR ELECTRIC DISTRIBUTION COMPANIES.
Vote Date: 3/14/2019
Vote Action: Joint Favorable
PH Date: 2/21/2019
File No.: 218

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SPONSORS OF BILL:
Energy and Technology Committee

CO-SPONSORS OF BILL:
Sen. Norman Needleman, 33rd Dist.
Sen. Catherine A. Osten, 19th Dist.
Sen. Martin M. Looney, 11th Dist.
Sen. Mary Daugherty Abrams, 13th Dist.
Sen. Christine Cohen, 12th Dist.
Sen. Julie Kushner, 24th Dist.
Sen. Will Haskell, 26th Dist.
Sen. Alex Bergstein, 36th Dist.
Sen. Mae Flexer, 29th Dist.
Sen. Carlo Leone, 27th Dist

REASONS FOR BILL:
Senator Needleman sought to create a structure that required electric distribution companies to employ a specific number of linesmen and disaster response workers so that in the event a major storm the electric distributors could react faster to restore power. The bill's aim is to mandate a significant crew in light of the recent storms that caused major damage and left many towns out of power for significant time. This team would be ready to respond and ideally lower the length of time for power restoration. The bill ultimately asks that PURA study the number of employees necessary to be fully prepared to react to restore services in the event of another major disaster.
RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

**Elin Katz Office of the Consumer Counsel – In Opposition** – OCC does not support the bill but feels that the issue of power outage is an important issue to address. OCC feels that the issue of timely power restoration is very important but that simply adding more employees to the payroll might not be a viable solution to the problem. Katz also comments that the distributors are already in the process of adding 100 additional linesmen as a result of an earlier PURA docket that was settled in the aftermath of previous storm response issues in 2018.

**Senator Cathy Osten, D19 - In Support** – Sen. Osten feels that our electric utilities continue to request rate hikes yet provide poor customer support to both municipalities and individuals. She states that it is important that we establish into law a structure for employment and strengthen the settlement that occurred between PURA and the utilities in the aftermath of the storms in 2011. She would also like to offer support of increasing the number of linemen from CT that are employed by the utilities.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

**David Weidlich Jr, President CWA Local 1298** – Weidlich supports the bill and encourages the committee to consider including both Frontier and the Cable Companies as industries that need to maintain minimum staffing levels as well.

**Joseph Selvaggio – Westport Connecticut Resident** – Selvaggio states that the bill will help promote energy efficiency while making energy more affordable.

**Catherine Iino, First Selectwoman – Killingworth CT** – Supports the bill because she believes it will help establish the proper framework for effective storm response and power restoration. Iino feels there have been major deficiencies in the past that need to be addressed and that this bill is a move in the right direction.

Joined By:
- Betsy Gara Executive Director Connecticut Council of Small Towns
- AARP

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

**Michael Hayhurst – Vice President of Electric Systems Operations Eversource** – Does not support the bill because PURA has already established an oversight structure to make sure that Eversource has the proper staffing level and response time for power restoration as a result of major storm damage. PURA has also already mandated that Eversource increase its linesmen staffing by 100 over three years in the decision from 2018 and Eversource is currently on track to fulfill this promise. They also state that storm recovery is a unique job that is an exercise in work management and not simply increased staffing levels.

Joined By:
- Charlie Eves, Vice President of Electric Operations – Avangrid

Reported by: Ben Lovejoy  Date: 03/25/2019