

A Plan for American Electricity Affordability

Polling and Messaging Overview

Current Public Opinion on Utilities

With cost of living as the most pressing issue, rising utility bills are top of mind among the basic necessities that Americans are struggling with.

Electricity costs are a major affordability concern for Americans

- **Americans are making immediate changes to keep up with costs.** 38% have changed how often they use AC or electricity and 36% report lowering heating because of costs. This is consistent across demographics and party lines.
- Americans' top concerns about data centers are higher electricity bills, increased power outages due to grid strain, and harmful pollutants and worsening air quality.
- **Americans want immediate relief** from high electricity bills, not just promises of future savings.

Key message: *Relief now + lower costs for the long term.*

65%

say utility prices are a top cost concern, second only to groceries.

70%

have changed their behavior because of rising utility and energy costs.

CAP's Policy Response

The most popular [policy solutions](#) focus on short-term costs relief alongside longer-term solutions.

- **Build a better, bigger power system:**
Accelerate permitting of new transmission and generation capacity, align utility incentives for lowering costs, and make public investments in clean energy and grid infrastructure.
- **Provide immediate rate relief:**
Create a federal rate relief fund for states that choose to freeze or lower residential electricity rates for four years.
- **Make AI data centers pay their fair share:**
Establish national standards requiring data centers to pay their fair share of energy and grid infrastructure costs rather than shifting costs onto residential consumers.

57%

support a federally backed rate freeze, even when tested as a partisan proposal.

72%

back CAP's mandatory fair share proposal. This continues to be among the most popular policies tested by Blue Rose, with support increasing by 3 points between February and August.

Source: CAP/Blue Rose Research, Feb. 2026, Aug. 2026.

Political Implications: Electricity Affordability Is a Leadership Opportunity

Democrats at the state level are well positioned to communicate clear solutions and bolster trust with Americans on this issue.

- **Americans hold corporations and the Trump administration responsible, not Democratic policies.** In addition to utility companies, Americans blame Republican-cued policy decisions over Democratic-cued policy decisions for utility hikes by a margin of 6 points.
- **Americans want immediate relief** alongside solutions that lower costs over the long term.
- **Electricity affordability creates an opportunity** for policymakers to pair near-term consumer relief with structural reforms.

Source: CAP/Blue Rose Research, Feb. 2026, Aug. 2026.

66%

blame utility companies the most for rising costs of energy. Just second is corruption in the oil and gas industry (64%).

+2

Democrats hold a slim margin on trust to handle the cost of utilities (+3 among swing voters).

CAP Policy Overview

Policy Topline: States Can Act Now to Lower Electricity Costs

- **Use state authority over retail electricity rates** to protect residential consumers.
- **Plan for growing electricity demand** while prioritizing investments that maintain reliability and lower ongoing system costs.
- **Strengthen utility accountability** by scrutinizing utility profits, rates of return, and costs passed on to ratepayers.
- **Remove state-level barriers to affordable energy and grid investment**, including through siting and interconnection reforms.
- **Ensure data centers pay their fair share** rather than shifting infrastructure costs onto existing ratepayers.

POLICY PILLAR #1

Build a Better, Bigger Power System

Goal: Expand electricity supply and grid capacity to create a system that is more affordable, resilient, and less exposed to fuel-price volatility.

Strategy 1

Make quick, clear, and reliable decisions on permitting and connecting to the grid

- Proposed state action: Adopt best-practice siting policies and streamline state processes for connecting distributed resources.

Strategy 2

Make utilities work to lower costs

- Proposed state action: Use existing utility regulatory authority to scrutinize utility investments, profits, and rates of return.

Strategy 3

Invest in new energy sources and grid improvements

- Proposed state action: Facilitate deployment of cost-effective generation and grid improvements within state jurisdiction.

POLICY PILLAR #2

Provide Immediate Rate Relief

Goal: Provide immediate relief from rising electricity costs while continuing to invest in a more affordable and reliable power system.

Participating states would:

- **Freeze residential rates for four years.**
- **Continue investing in improvements that lower total system costs**, including submitting an investment plan that meets demand and maintains reliability.
- **Shield consumers from price spikes**, while working to reduce exposure to volatile fuel costs.
- **Protect ratepayers from unnecessary expenses** by scrutinizing utility profits and rates of return and preventing lobbying and trade association dues from being passed on to ratepayers.

POLICY PILLAR #3

Make AI Data Centers Pay Their Fair Share

Goal: Ensure rapid data-center growth does not force households and existing businesses to subsidize new electricity infrastructure.

Strategy: Establish nationwide fair-share standards so households do not subsidize data-center electricity costs.

States would implement the standards by:

- Ensuring **connection fees cover the upfront grid and generation costs** caused by new data centers.
- **Creating a separate customer class for data centers.**
- **Setting transparent rates** so that class pays at least its proportional share of total system costs.
- **Using facility-specific demand and energy charges based on time of use.**
- **Preventing utilities from shifting data-center-driven capital costs onto existing ratepayers.**