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NEM, marketers call for removing PTC from utility bills

The price-to-compare (PTC) that appears on many utility bills should either be removed or fixed to reflect a true price for consumers, said NEM President Craig Goodman yesterday at his group's Fall Leadership Roundtable in Trenton, NJ. "An inaccurate PTC does more harm to

marketers and the market than not having anything at all," he added.

The PTC is published by some IOUs on power and natural gas bills and is meant to give consumers a per-therm or KWH price to compare when choosing between a retail offer and default service.

A PTC is not competitively neutral and since the utility bill may not have been unbundled, the use of widely disparate PTCs on consumer bills may be inherently misleading and not serving the consumers interests -- and should be deleted from utility bills, said NEM.

The roundtable was designed to bring the marketers and other energy executives together to discuss with New Jersey officials what has and has not worked in other states. NEM stressed it did not want to discuss where the state stands on the various issues -- to avoid discussing topics before regulators.

"Part of the problem is the fact that the price may disappear the next month and it's not apples to apples," said Jodi Larison, the senior business development manager at UGI Energy Services. Marketers may sign a customer to a 6-, 12- or 18-month deal but the PTC usually does not include time in the price. Also, PTCs do not typically include a list of what costs they include.

"Some of these are class averages so it wouldn't reflect the customer's price," added Larison.

Instead of including a PTC on bills, which serves to give the IOU an advantage, said North American Power President William Kinneary, the research should be placed where it belongs. "Take the price off of the bill and let the customers do what they need to do," said Kinneary, adding that consumers are used to researching the market for price and features.

[\[Comments\]](#)

Bingaman believes clean energy bill could materialize soon

Sen Jeff Bingaman, D-NM, could move a clean energy standard (CES) soon if he likes what he sees from a requested EIA analysis of different options to implement the policy. EIA should get back to the Energy & Natural Resources Committee chairman next month, he told the Natural Gas Roundtable yesterday.

The issue dropped off the front pages of most newspapers though it was a major energy topic earlier this year when President Barack Obama endorsed the idea in his State of the Union address.

"I think that it's hard to see how we get the votes to pass it," Bingaman told reporters after his remarks. "I think my effort has been to try to be sure that we do the best job we can of getting a clean-energy standard designed in a way that would be good policy -- and so we've taken pains to do that."

While it would "very difficult" to get a CES through both houses of Congress this session, that does not mean that the policy should not be introduced and discussed with

interested parties, he added.

A CES is needed to make the energy supply more diverse and to lessen its impact on the environment, said Bingaman.

"I have concerns that the free market will not by itself drive us toward greater diversity in energy supply in the power sector," he added. "I also have concerns that the free market will not by itself drive us to continue to develop and deploy the new clean energy technologies that we will need to reduce our emissions of greenhouse gases."

The entities subject to a CES would be all electric service providers that sell power to retail consumers -- and the base should be all utility sales in a given calendar year. The standard would include renewables, natural gas, nuclear and clean coal and would start at 45% in 2015 and ramp up to 95% by 2050.

The CES the committee asked EIA to look at does not include any specific technology targets since it was designed

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New Jersey regulator urges using advertising to educate consumers

New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (BPU) Commissioner Nicholas Asselta yesterday told marketers and other energy executives that he wants to see customer and load migration improve in his state, and he wants to know how marketers plan to get the word out. He was speaking at the NEM Fall Leadership Roundtable in Trenton, NJ.

The conference looked at marketing and rulemaking in other states, though discussions were typically steered away from New Jersey-specific issues to avoid

discussing dockets before the BPU.

The hope, said NEM President Craig Goodman, is that the regulators in attendance will go back to their offices with a good idea of what has and has not worked and where improvements can be made.

Asselta urged the use of advertisements to spread the word about the market. He spoke of a gentleman who runs an "organization that represents hundreds of thousands of workers" and who called the commissioner one evening to find out what he knows of

"third-party suppliers." Asselta said he discussed it with the man, whom he did not want to name, and explained what choice is and how it works.

"Here is a man that represents hundreds of thousands of people, is known nationwide and he had no idea what retail gas and electricity was all about," said Asselta. "This just illustrates how little people in New Jersey know."

Knowing what message to put out in a 30- or 60-second commercial has been