

Hunterdon Freeholders Support Bill Requiring Utilities To Reimburse Residents Losses From Power Outages

Hunterdon County's Freeholders, at the August 18th meeting, approved a resolution supporting Senator Kip Bateman's legislation, S-2836, that requires an electric power utility to reimburse residential customers for the cost of food and prescription medicine spoiled or compromised due to a prolonged power outage.

Freeholder John E. Lanza, in sponsoring the resolution, said, "I have heard from a number of residents with regard to the lost food and medicines when their power was out for a prolonged period of time during the recent tropical storm. Senator Bateman and I discussed the issue and he proposed legislation last Thursday, which would require utilities to reimburse residential customers for the cost of losses.

This is a piece of legislation that I believe this Board should get behind and we should encourage other Freeholder Boards across the state to support it."

The Freeholder Resolution states that power utilities need a financial consequence for not meeting the expectations of their customers and to fully appreciate the financial loss that residents' shoulder from prolonged and sustained power outages.

County Administrator Kevin P. Davis reported to the Freeholders, "Under the proposed legislation reimbursement would be up to a maximum of \$500 for lost food and \$1000 for lost medications. The bill defines a prolonged or sustained interruption as lasting for more than 48 hours caused by major events including, but not limited to, a thunderstorm, tornado, hurricane, flood, heat wave, snow storm, ice storm, earthquake, terrorist attack, or any other condition that the BPU determines."

Davis noted the bill has been referred to the Senate Economic Growth Committee and Senator Holzapfel from Ocean County has joined Senator Bateman in sponsorship.