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Group: Utility customers sold 'a bill of goods'

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LANSING - Michigan utility customers are paying more for less a year after the state re-regulated the energy market, advocates for more competition said at the Capitol this morning.

The group calling itself the Customer Choice Coalition said Michigan's residential utility rates have skyrocketed in the year since the law went into effect, to the highest in the region. At the same time, very little progress has been made on energy efficiency or renewables, they said.

The legislature was "sold a bill of goods" by Consumers Energy and DTE, said state Sen. Cameron Brown, R-Fawn River Township, who said he will soon introduce legislation to remove a cap on the ability of alternative power companies to serve customers in Michigan.

Under rates approved since re-regulation went into effect, DTE customers are paying 20% more and Consumers' customers 9% more, the group said.

At the same time, projections about the need for higher future energy needs, one of the primary rationales for last year's legislation, have been dramatically downscaled, said Barry Cargill, executive director of the choice coalition.

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