

# Consumer Energy Information (E-Access) Act

## Senator Edward J. Markey (D-Mass.)

Americans use information about gasoline prices and car mileage to understand the impact of driving on their pocket books and to manage their vehicle purchases and usage. However, when it comes to electricity consumption, many consumers lack access to basic information about the energy usage in their homes and businesses.

The E-Access Act would address this problem by providing incentives for states and utilities to adopt policies to ensure commercial and residential consumers and their designated energy services providers have timely access to this information. It builds on and broadens the efforts that many states and utilities are already taking with regard to electricity data sharing policies. It also builds upon the Green Button Program, a voluntary consumer data sharing initiative in which over 50 utilities are committed to providing their 60 million customers with easy-to-understand information about their electricity use.

In this age of fast-moving information, data is critical to spurring innovation and enhancing efficiency. The energy sector is no exception. Armed with their electricity information, residential consumers will be better able to manage their home thermostat, appliances or lighting. They will be able to optimize the size and cost-effectiveness of solar panels for their home, or verify that energy efficiency investments are performing as promised. Businesses will be able to unlock the full value of energy efficiency savings, thereby increasing their competitiveness and helping to create and retain jobs.

This legislation would help provide consumers and businesses with new tools to use electricity more efficiently, save money on their electric bills and also help to capture the full potential of the smart grid.

### Technical Summary

#### **E-Access does three things:**

**1. State Energy Plans:** Amends Section 362(d) of the Energy Policy and Conservation Act (42 U.S.C. 6322(d)) by making two additional activities eligible for Department of Energy funding under the existing State Energy Program. Newly eligible activities are those that enhance consumer access to and understanding of energy usage and price information and those that allow for the development and adoption of innovative products and services that assist consumers in managing energy consumption and expenditures.

**2. Voluntary Guidelines for Energy Information Access:** Requires DOE to issue model standards for improving electric energy information access in States. DOE shall consult with State and local regulatory authorities, consumer and privacy advocacy groups, utilities, appropriate federal agencies, and others in developing guidelines that detail appropriate levels of timeliness and specificity of the consumer data, protections for data security and privacy, format and machine-readability of data, and similar issues.

**3. Assistance in Implementing:** Upon certification by the Secretary that a State's data sharing policies meet the voluntary DOE guidelines, the State becomes eligible to receive federal support for implementing the new State Energy Program activities authorized by the bill. \$10 million is authorized for these purposes.