



CITY COUNCIL MUST HOLD ENTERGY ACCOUNTABLE FOR FAILING NEW ORLEANIANS AGAIN

NEW ORLEANS – Sept. 14, 2021 – The coalition Energy Future New Orleans (EFNO) is calling on the New Orleans City Council to hold Entergy accountable for its mismanagement and neglect of rusting and aging equipment which led to a city-wide power outage following Hurricane Ida, and follows a host of failures by the utility corporation.

Today, attorneys for EFNO members filed a motion with the City Council that seeks:

- **A full investigation into what caused the Entergy power outage after Hurricane Ida**
- **An independent management audit of Entergy corporations**
- **A prudence review to determine the fairness of the costs on Entergy bills for the new gas plant in New Orleans East**

The motion also urges action by the Council to make New Orleans climate-ready for more storms and hotter days with distributed renewable energy, including expanding solar energy with battery storage in the city.

“New Orleans is a world-class city with a substandard energy system that is not prepared for climate change,” said Monique Harden, Assistant Director of Law and Public Policy at the Deep South Center for Environmental Justice. “The inequity that results in polluting Black and other communities of color, as well as leaving people without power in the blazing heat and freezing cold is rooted in lax regulation that leaves it to Entergy to decide our energy issues. We filed this motion because change is needed today to push Councilmembers on setting energy policies that prioritize safety and fairness for all residents,” she said.

EFNO’s motion urges the Council to order a full investigation of Entergy’s power failure during Hurricane Ida, which put the safety of New Orleans at risk. According to the Louisiana Department of Health, [the power failure contributed to the deaths of 12 residents](#). In the two weeks that have passed since Hurricane Ida, Entergy has not provided answers for the massive power outage.

The motion also calls for an independent audit of Entergy companies due to chronic mismanagement which results in poor service to New Orleans customers. Examples include excessive power outages, sky-high electric bills that do not match up with usage, and the power shut-off on a freezing cold Mardi Gras night this year. Although Council President Helena Moreno expressed support for the independent management audit of Entergy, there has been no action by the Council to order it.

“The City Council needs to do a much better job of ensuring that our utility company serves the people of New Orleans and not the fossil fuel industry,” said Susan Stevens Miller, Earthjustice senior attorney. “We need utility advisors who actually have expertise in overseeing a utility. The Council must investigate how Entergy failed us during the storm and failed us with a faulty, expensive gas plant we didn’t ask for. We’re calling on the City Council to conduct the management audit they promised last spring because we demand greater accountability for these failures,” she said.

Entergy has already collected \$30 million from New Orleans customers for the new gas plant with black-start capability that it built in New Orleans East. The money collected is the first year of installment payments. The total cost for the gas plant is \$650 million which New Orleans residents and future generations are on the hook to pay to Entergy for the next 29 years. EFNO’s motion calls into question the fairness of New Orleans customers bearing the entire costs for the gas plant because it did not operate on its own in the power outage, as promised by Entergy to win Council approval for it, and the plant is now being used to power areas outside of the city.

“We can’t let Entergy control our energy future anymore,” said Jesse George, New Orleans Policy Director, Alliance for Affordable Energy. “We need an entirely new way of providing energy in this city that is resilient, renewable and equitable. Entergy sold us a gas plant that couldn’t possibly work, saying it would be the solution, but now that the storm has passed it is clear it did not work as promised,” George said.

What did work was rooftop solar with battery storage. Residents were able to generate and store solar energy in their homes during the storm and after Entergy’s power failure. Some were able to help out neighbors and friends who needed to charge phones, chill medicine, and get out of the heat.

Community-driven solutions, like solar with battery storage, are key to the post-storm rebuilding of an energy system in New Orleans that works for everyone. This rebuilding begins with the Council holding Entergy accountable for its dilapidated and neglected energy system dressed up in false and misleading P.R.

“I’m used to hunkering down with power out for a few days after a hurricane, but Entergy’s failure was a nightmare that lasted 10 days in the terrible heat,” said Ms. Katherine Prevost, President of the Bunny Friend Neighborhood Association in the Upper Ninth Ward. “Entergy

must be held accountable because people needlessly suffered from its rusting and aging equipment that collapsed, while most homes in New Orleans were not damaged by Ida,” she said.

Jaqueline Thanh, Executive Director VAYLA, said, “VAYLA, together with our community across generations and despite language barriers, has demanded accountability from Entergy time and time again. We fought against the gas plant. And we simply cannot afford the disproportionate burden of health disparities placed on our BIPOC communities. At the very least, Entergy must be held accountable for the promises they make.”

The New Orleans City Council has the unique authority to hold Entergy New Orleans accountable and demand clean, reliable, and affordable electricity.

#

About Energy Future New Orleans

EFNO is a coalition of diverse people and organizations dedicated to making New Orleans an equitable and renewable energy city for present and future generations.

EFNO stood in opposition to the Entergy gas plant based on well-researched data showing that it would not work on its own, as claimed by Entergy; and facts that Entergy did not evaluate the alternative energy options ordered by the Council, chose a site that would expose Black and Vietnamese-American residents to harmful toxins, and would increase climate pollution.

Recent accomplishments by EFNO and its member organizations include:

- **Introduced a policy supporting community solar projects that approved by the City Council.**
- **Advocated for a mandatory 100% renewable portfolio standard by 2040 that resulted in the City Council approving a mandatory standard by 2050 that is a combination of renewable energy and 30 percent nuclear energy.**
- **Blocked Entergy's push for increasing bills with a higher profit margin.**

The Energy Future New Orleans Coalition includes the Alliance for Affordable Energy, Audubon Louisiana, Deep South Center for Environmental Justice, Earthjustice, Greater New Orleans Housing Association, Sierra Club, VAYLA and 350 New Orleans