

Issue Brief: SELC Report on Energy Burden and Health Impacts for Households in Memphis, TN

Background:

On July 11, 2024, the Southern Environmental Law Center issued a press release about a report titled "[Energy Burden and Health Impacts for Households in Memphis, Tennessee](#)" which contains claims against the Tennessee Valley Authority.

The report is an update to a report first issued in September 2022. Greenlink Analytics claims they have processed more recent data using new 2020 census tract designations to update the report, publishing the update in May 2024.

Through using this new census tract data, the report claims Memphis has one of the highest median energy burdens compared with other metropolitan statistical area (MSA) across the country. The report claims that this new method of calculation determined that Tennessee's median energy burden is 3.4%, in Shelby County it is 4.5%, and in Memphis it is 5.6%.

The report acknowledges that MLGW rates are "relatively low." It should be noted that only electric heating data was used to create the report, excluding all other heating fuels not supplied by MLGW.

Media relations team aligned with MLGW before responding to one media request for comment from WREG-TV in Memphis using facts from TVA's website, TVA EnergyRight, previous news releases and web stories, and approved talking points.

External Media Statement

Although TVA and MLGW customers have some of the lowest electricity rates in the nation, TVA agrees that energy burden is an important issue not only in Memphis, but across our service area. That's why we are partnering with our local power companies, like MLGW, and investing millions of dollars in programs that address the causes of high bills, including energy efficiency programs and rebates, Home Uplift, School Uplift and investing in communities as a whole. We are reducing our coal generation and our carbon output and investing in cleaner, reliable natural gas as part of our diverse portfolio while keeping rates as low as feasibly possible.

Addressing Specific Report Misinformation

<p>What is the progress on the proposed Allen Gas Project? Are you all aware of the critiques and if so, how is the company planning on addressing residents' concerns?</p>	<p>We have a proposal to replace outdated gas combustion turbines at Allen with new, fast-start aero combustion turbines. The proposal (which has not been approved) will be open for public comment in the near future. Details can be found at Allen Aeroderivative Combustion Turbine Project (tva.com)</p>
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<p>"It's past time for TVA to stop its decades-long history of polluting this majority Black and lower-income community and invest in cheaper and cleaner energy sources that will help decrease the energy burden and air pollution in Southwest Memphis."</p>	<p>We agree that energy burden is an important issue that many people face, particularly in Memphis. That's why we're partnering with MLGW in the community, investing millions of dollars in programs like Home Uplift, which helps people make their homes more energy efficient and lowersg their bills. TVA EnergyRight has an entire website www.energyright.com dedicated to connecting people with ways to reduce their bills. We announced programs this summer that offer cash rebates for people to do simple things like get a tune up for your HVAC. TVA's website and social media highlights the many ways TVA is actually in the community helping people rather than just putting out reports:</p> <p>Smart Steps in a Heat Wave (tva.com) Memphis Mom Enjoys "Warm Blanket" of Home Uplift (tva.com) Home Uplift Helps First-Time Memphis Homeowners Shoulder Utility Bills (tva.com) Journey Coleman School receives School Uplift grant</p> <p>We also know that some of our communities have a shortage of qualified individuals who can inspect homes for energy efficiency upgrades. That's why we have partnered with Moore Tech in Memphis. TVA EnergyRight has constructed a permanent training house on the Moore Tech campus to provide hands-on instruction specifically for home energy efficiency upgrades. And, our retiree organization, BVI, funded the development of curriculum and instructors for the weatherization training program.</p> <p>TVA Partners with Moore Tech on Training Facility</p>
<p>"The federal utility is planning to spend billions on eight new gas power plants—including the proposed Allen Gas Project in South Memphis, which would be built directly next to an already-operating gas plant."</p>	<p>Our region is growing at three times the national average, so TVA needs more generation to keep up with demand from the growing population. Renewable energy is important, but what SELC won't tell you is that it's NOT completely reliable. Solar only provides energy when the sun is shining and can only deliver about 30 percent of its capacity. The rest is what we have to account for – and natural gas is a reliable, affordable solution to keep the lights on. It's also half the carbon emissions of coal, which is what we're replacing for the most part. Natural gas is a steppingstone into a cleaner energy future – allowing for more renewables to come on to our system.</p> <p>TVA Plans to Invest \$15 Billion Over the Next Three Years to Meet Region's Growth</p>

	<p>TVA is investing \$1.5 billion in energy efficiency and demand response programs to help offset 30 percent of our load growth through FY33. The cheapest megawatt is the one we don't have to produce.</p> <p>TVA Driving Clean Energy Economy for a Sustainable Future</p> <p>We are adding up to 10,000 megawatts of renewable energy, mainly solar, to the grid by 2035. We have 4,000 megawatts of solar in commercial operation or in development today. Our energy system is more than 50% carbon free, more than most other utilities in the U.S.</p> <p>Valley Renewable Energy (tva.com)</p>
<p>"TVA recently raised rates for its 10 million customers, in part because of its massive gas buildout."</p>	<p>TVA is committed to providing affordable, reliable, resilient, and increasingly cleaner power to customers and the Valley region. We did raise our wholesale rates by 4.5% LAST YEAR starting on October 1, 2023. This funds overall investments in the system, not specifically natural gas, contrary to SELC claims.</p> <p>TVA delivers some of the lowest energy costs in the nation. Even with the FY24 adjustment, our energy costs remain lower than 70 percent of the nation's top 100 utilities.</p> <p>TVA Adds Natural Gas Generation to the Grid The Power of Reserve Generation (tva.com)</p>