

**Chapter 328: FUNDING SOURCE FOR INTERCONNECTION OMBUDSMAN**

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**SUMMARY:** This rule establishes a funding source and a mechanism for collecting those funds to support the position in the Commission for an interconnection ombudsman, as established by P.L. 2023, Chapter 307, as amended by P.L. 2024, Chapter 643, § WWW-1, codified at 35-A M.R.S. § 3474.

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**1. ESTABLISHMENT OF INTERCONNECTION OMBUDSMAN**

There will be an interconnection ombudsman appointed by the Commission to assist with the interconnection of solar resources and energy storage systems pursuant to 35-A M.R.S. § 3474 and Chapter 324 of the Commission's rules. The purpose of this rule is to set forth provisions relating to the funding of the position of an interconnection ombudsman.

**2. INTERCONNECTION OMBUDSMAN FUND**

- A. Establishment of the Fund. The Commission will create a nonlapsing fund for the purpose of funding the work of an interconnection ombudsman, who will be a member of the Commission's Staff. This fund will be referred to as the "Interconnection Ombudsman Fee Fund."

The Commission will appoint an ombudsman who has the expertise and experience as described in 35-A M.R.S. § 3474(4)(A). This position will be partially funded by this fund with fees collected pursuant to subsection 2(B) of this chapter. Any remaining amount needed to support the position will be covered by the Commission's regulatory funding sources.

B. Establishment of Fees to be Paid by Interconnection Customers

1. The Commission establishes an "Interconnection Ombudsman Fee" that must be paid by any customer of an investor-owned transmission and distribution utility seeking to interconnect a solar resource or an energy storage system to the utility's distribution system pursuant to Chapter 324 of the Commission's rules.
2. For purposes of this Chapter, a "solar resource" is a resource as defined in 35-A M.R.S. § 3210-C(1)(E) that uses solar power.
3. For purposes of this Chapter, an "energy storage system" has the meaning set forth in 35-A M.R.S. § 3481(6), whether or not such energy storage system is collocated with a solar resource.
4. The utility must collect the fee at the time the interconnecting customer submits an application for interconnection.

5. The amount of the fee will be \$40 per interconnection application.
6. An application for interconnection will not be considered complete until the Interconnection Ombudsman Fee has been received by the utility.

C. Remittance of Interconnection Ombudsman Fees.

1. The transmission and distribution utility must remit all Interconnection Ombudsman Fees it has collected to the Commission on a quarterly basis. The collected fees must be remitted no later than the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the final month of each quarter. The transmission and distribution utility will include a cover letter identifying the funds as being remitted to the Interconnection Ombudsman Fee.
2. The Commission will hold all Interconnection Ombudsman Fees remitted by the transmission and distribution utilities in the Interconnection Ombudsman Fee Fund. This fund will be used solely for the purpose of funding the interconnection ombudsman position.
3. The Commission may accept contributions from public and private sources or from grants or other sources of funding from the federal government into the Interconnection Ombudsman Fee Fund.
4. Within 30 days of the close of the calendar year, that is, by January 30 each year, the transmission and distribution utilities will submit a report providing the following information:
  - a. The number of solar resource and energy storage system applications for interconnection received during the previous calendar year;
  - b. The total Interconnection Ombudsman Fees collected; and
  - c. The amount remitted to the Commission.

### 3. WAIVER

Upon the request of any person subject to this Chapter or upon its own motion, the Commission may, for good cause, waive any requirement of this Chapter that is not required by statute. The waiver may not be inconsistent with the purposes of this Chapter or Title 35-A. The Commission, the Director of Electric and Gas Industries, or the Presiding Officer assigned to a proceeding related to this Chapter may grant the waiver.

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**BASIS STATEMENT:** The factual and policy basis for this Rule is set forth in the Commission's Order Adopting Rule and Statement of Factual and Policy Basis, Docket No. 2024-00218, issued on November 19, 2024. Copies of this Statement and Order have been filed with this rule at the Office of the Secretary of State. Copies may also be obtained from the Administrative Director, Public Utilities Commission, 18 State House Station, Augusta, Maine, 04333-0018.

**STATUTORY AUTHORITY:** 35-A M.R.S.A. §§ 104, 111, and P.L. 2023, c. 307, as amended by P.L. 2024, c. 643, Sec. WWW-1, codified at 35-A M.R.S. § 3474.

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** This rule was approved as to form and legality by the Attorney General on December 4, 2024. It was filed with the Secretary of State on December 6, 2024 and became effective on December 11, 2024 (filing 2024-264).