

BERLINER DISCUSSES PEPSCO AT TOWN HALL FORUM

Councilmember Roger Berliner said Wednesday Pepco customers should be compensated for paid services that were never provided.

By [Frances Correa](#) | February 2, 2011

Update, 10:50a.m.: Councilmember Roger Berliner (D-Dist. 1) met with constituents Wednesday evening at a town hall-style public forum in Bethesda. At the meeting, Berliner discussed his recent call for Pepco to create a restitution fund after the Maryland Public Service Commission reported this week that Pepco had been charging customers since 2007 for service it never provided during power outages.

The push for the restitution fund comes as criticism of Pepco is mounting after Wednesday's snow storm caused extended outages for thousands in the county.

Under the rules today, Pepco is earning money no matter how long you and I are without power. They are financially indifferent, Berliner said. Pepco should have a financial incentive to get the lights back on faster, Berliner said. From my perspective, they have gotten millions of dollars since 2007 they never should have gotten.

Berliner continued, I applaud the commission for waking up and realizing this was a mistake and trying to fix it. It's some small step to paying you back for the inconvenience they have caused.

Wednesday, Berliner also discussed state legislation set to be introduced in Annapolis Thursday that would create reliability standards for the utility. Berliner helped draft the legislation, and it's slated to be introduced by Del. Brian Feldman (D-Dist. 15) of Potomac. Stay tuned to Patch for more details on the legislation.

Original post: Councilmember Roger Berlinger (D-Dist. 1) called for the creation of a restitution fund for Pepco customers today, after the Maryland Public Service Commission discovered that Pepco had been charging customers for service that was never provided, since 2007. The commission presented [their report](#) to the Montgomery County Council yesterday.

Yesterday, the Maryland Public Service Commission revealed the existence of a significant regulatory gap that unwittingly eliminated a critical incentive to restore service quickly, said Councilmember Berliner. Indeed, this gap allowed Pepco to collect what is likely to be millions of dollars from ratepayers for electric service that wasn't provided since 2007—precisely the time frame in which Pepco's reliability fell into the lowest quartile in the nation.

The Commission is right to take action that will immediately eliminate this perverse disincentive to restore power quickly. But they should go one critical step further. They should create a restitution fund out of these ill-gotten gains and provide immediate and direct rebates to consumers. Pepco should never have been given these dollars and they should be required to give them back every dollar. Our residents have suffered enormously and this restitution fund is just one small step towards making it right.

Berliner will host a town hall meeting Wednesday evening at 7:30 p.m. at [North Bethesda Middle School](#). The meeting is an open forum to allow residents to give feedback and voice their concerns on a wide array of issues, including Pepco.