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Candaras Announces Opposition to WMECo Rate Hike Request *Proposal would “Pull the Plug on Our Fragile Recovery”*

Wilbraham – Senator Gale D. Candaras (D – Wilbraham) today announced her opposition to the rate hike proposed by Western Massachusetts Electric Company (WMECo). “The rate increase WMECo is seeking is excessive, especially as we work to develop our fragile economic recovery.” Candaras said, “We should be working to build on the 19,000 jobs the Massachusetts private sector created in July, this rate hike will threaten the hard fought progress the region and the state has made.”

The proposal from WMECo, which must be approved by the Department of Public Utilities (DPU), seeks a 25% increase in the distribution rate, guarantees a 10.5% profit margin for the company, and mandates yearly rate hikes without approval from the DPU.

Candaras will address a public hearing on the matter this Thursday, August 26th at Springfield City Hall where she will urge the DPU to reject the proposed rate increase and several other aspects of the plan. “The Department of Public Utilities must ensure our electric companies are providing safe, reliable, and timely service at a fair and affordable rate. I am confident that after hearing from the many voices weighing in on this important issue, the DPU will have a true understanding of the likely negative impact this plan would have if implemented.”

In addition, Candaras called on the DPU to extend the notice and comment period on the matter, due to expire August 26. In an August 23 letter to DPU Chairwoman Ann Berwick, Candaras noted, “[M]any concerned ratepayers, both private and corporate, are

on vacation or short-staffed due to vacations and unable to fully assess the impact of the proposed increase and prepare testimony in time to meet the August 26 hearing deadline.”

In addition to Candaras, Attorney General Martha Coakley and Mayor Dominic Sarno have indicated their opposition to the proposal. “A number of constituents have asked me to continue the fight against this rate hike. Working for my constituents is without a doubt the most important part of my job,” Candaras said.