



Testimony submitted to the Joint Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities and Energy  
IN SUPPORT OF H.2870 and S.1768 - An Act relative to protecting consumers of gas and electricity from paying for  
leaked and unaccounted for gas  
and  
H.2871 and S.1767 - An Act relative to gas leak repairs during road projects  
By Launa Zimmaro, LWVMA Energy and Resource Conservation Specialist  
December 14, 2015

The League of Women Voters has been a strong advocate of efforts to protect our environment and natural resources as key to ensuring the health, safety and welfare of the public. Repairing gas leaks in Massachusetts as quickly as possible makes sense for economic reasons as well as for the health and safety implications for residents and the environment. There is an urgent need to reduce the amount of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Methane, the primary component of natural gas, is a potent greenhouse gas, with [84 times the atmospheric warming capacity](#)<sup>1</sup> of carbon dioxide. Repairing these leaks, estimated as contributing approximately [4%](#)<sup>2</sup> to [10%](#)<sup>3</sup> of MA greenhouse gas emissions, is also needed to help Massachusetts meet mandated emissions-reduction targets for 2020 stipulated in the Global Warming Solutions Act.

The economic downside of lost and unaccounted for gas is huge. A [report](#)<sup>4</sup> commissioned by Senator Edward Markey and released in August 2013, indicates that in Massachusetts alone “at least 99 billion cubic feet of natural gas was ‘lost and unaccounted for’ in Massachusetts from 2000-2011.” Pipes tasked to bring natural gas from point A to point B released somewhere in the range of \$640 million-\$1.5 billion in gas into the world. Per person, the report estimated that customers with Boston Gas (part of National Grid), New England Gas, NStar Gas (now Eversource), and Essex Gas “each paid over \$370 to \$875 on average in lost and unaccounted for gas costs from 2000-2011.” It is unreasonable to expect consumers to pay for this “lost and unaccounted for” gas, a problem that occurs when the utilities fail to maintain their infrastructure. For all these reasons, we ask you to support H.2871 and S.1767.

It is also practical and efficient to repair gas leaks when exposed during scheduled road projects, with the most serious (Level 1) leaks repaired immediately and all other leaks repaired within 12 months, as proposed in H.2871 and S.1767.

The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts urges you to move these bills out of committee and to the floor for a vote this legislative session – for consumers, for our commonwealth and for the common good.

Thank you for your consideration.

---

<sup>1</sup> Environmental Defense Fund: <https://www.edf.org/methane-other-important-greenhouse-gas>. Accessed 12/7/15.

<sup>2</sup> Conservation Law Foundation: <http://clf.org/map/>. Accessed 12/7/15.

<sup>3</sup> Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences: <http://www.pnas.org/content/112/7/1941.full.pdf>. Accessed 12/7/15.

<sup>4</sup> America Pays for Gas Leaks, Report by Senator Ed Markey, August 1, 2013:  
[http://www.markey.senate.gov/documents/markey\\_lost\\_gas\\_report.pdf](http://www.markey.senate.gov/documents/markey_lost_gas_report.pdf). Accessed 12/7/15.