



**Testimony submitted to the Joint Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities and Energy
In support of H.2683/S.1845 An Act relative to protecting consumers of gas and electricity from paying for
leaked and unaccounted for gas
By Launa Zimmaro, LWVMA Energy and Resource Conservation Specialist
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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 capacity¹ of carbon dioxide. Repairing these leaks, estimated as contributing approximately 4%² to 10%³ of Massachusetts greenhouse gas emissions, is also needed to help Massachusetts meet mandated emissions-reduction targets for 2020 stipulated in the Global Warming Solutions Act. The level of leaks from natural gas pipelines in the state begs the question of why new natural gas pipelines are needed. It is notable that a coalition of Republican state legislators wrote the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to consider the issue of natural gas leaks in its consideration of the proposed Kinder Morgan Northeast Energy Direct pipeline. It just makes sense to fix the leaks in an effort to accurately determine if there is a need for additional natural gas infrastructure.

The economic downside of lost and unaccounted for gas is huge. A report⁴ commissioned by Senator Edward Markey and released in August 2013 indicates that “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 worth of 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. In fact, Texas, Pennsylvania and other states prohibit gas companies from charging customers for leaked gas in their states. For all these reasons, we ask you to support H.2683 and S.1845.

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.

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

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

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

⁴ America Pays for Gas Leaks, Report by Senator Ed Markey, August 1, 2013:
http://www.markey.senate.gov/documents/markey_lost_gas_report.pdf. Accessed 12/7/15.