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Higher utility bills likely

Delta Utilities says soaring gas prices to blame for La. hikes

BY SAM KARLIN  
Staff writer

The blast of winter weather that brought ice and freezing temperatures to Louisiana will likely cause prolonged spikes in utility bills, a result of the state's dominant gas and electric supplier facing soaring prices in recent weeks for natural gas.

The state's largest gas supplier, Delta Utilities, warned that bills will rise in the coming months after prices on the spot market — where the company goes to supplement its existing contracts during times of high usage — soared to all-time highs in late January. Meanwhile, consumer advocates

say Entergy electric bills are likely to follow suit. Entergy relies heavily on natural gas to fuel its power plants, getting nearly two-thirds of its energy that way. The company passes on all fuel costs to customers, making it likely residents will pay for the higher gas prices.

Natural gas prices have steadily ticked upward in recent months, but their latest surge came at the same time Louisiana customers were using more gas to stay warm while bitter winter weather blasted through the region. And the state's dominant utilities have been under the spotlight for customer complaints about high prices, outages and the controversial sale

last summer of Entergy's gas business to Delta.

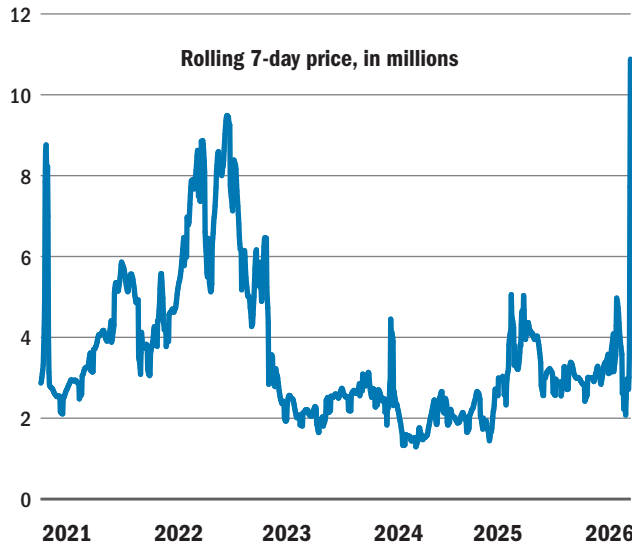
Utilities here have long bet big on natural gas as a cheap and abundant resource, with a sprawling network of pipelines making it easy to spin up power plants around the state. But periodic price shocks and storms over the past few years have ignited debates over how the state should best manage its power supply. Cyclical rising costs have prompted some advocates to question whether the state is overreliant on natural gas.

"This is a problem we've been trying to highlight for both regulators

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Natural gas prices spike

Prices of natural gas at Louisiana's Henry Hub have soared in recent days amid a blast of cold weather that has tightened supplies and sent demand soaring.



Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration via FRED Staff graphic

ECA earns Blue Ribbon



STAFF PHOTOS BY LESLIE WESTBROOK

Education officials, administrators and faculty pose for a photo during an event to recognize Early College Academy as one of eight Blue Ribbon Schools in the state on Wednesday at South Louisiana Community College in Lafayette.

Education officials visit to mark performance honor

BY ASHLEY WHITE  
Staff writer

Students, teachers, families and community partners gathered Wednesday morning to celebrate the Early College Academy being named a Louisiana Blue Ribbon School.

ECA is one of eight Louisiana schools that received the designation awarded to schools that demonstrate outstanding academic performance and for making

significant progress in closing student achievement gaps.

"It just validates the work that we put in," said senior and ECA student of the year Dylan Lewis. "To be recognized on this scale and this level means a lot to not only us as students, but it means a lot to us that our teachers are being recognized for their great work."

ECA started in 2008 as a partnership between the Lafayette Parish school system and South Louisiana Community College. Students can enroll in their freshman year and by the time they graduate, have

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State Superintendent of Education Cade Brumley speaks during Wednesday's event.

Murrill to sue in abortion pill battle

Attorney general wants to extradite doctors

BY ALYSE PFEIL  
Staff writer

Louisiana's attorney general is preparing to sue California Gov. Gavin Newsom and New York Gov. Kathy Hochul in federal court in an effort to force those states to extradite doctors who face criminal charges for mailing pills to Louisiana for abortions.

It's the only way to "address them protecting people who are openly committed to nullifying and violating our criminal laws in our state," Attorney General Liz Murrill said in an interview Wednesday.

Louisiana has sent formal requests to California and New York to extradite doctors in two separate criminal cases, both of which involve state felony charges for causing an abortion by means of abortion-inducing drugs.

Newsom and Hochul have each refused to turn the doctors over to Louisiana for criminal prosecution. They cite their state's abortion shield laws, which protect doctors and patients from prosecution initiated in states that outlaw abortion.

"As a champion of reproductive freedoms, California will not hesitate to assert its lawful authority to defend the fundamental rights

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The Hall of Fame case for legendary Saint Drew Brees

When I asked Luke Kuechly about Drew Brees' Pro Football Hall of Fame credentials, he didn't mince words.

"He's a no-brainer," said Kuechly, the great Carolina Panthers linebacker, who battled Brees twice annually during his stellar career. "If Drew Brees doesn't get in on first ballot, we should be asking, 'What are we doing here?'"

Brees, who is one of 15 finalists for the Hall's Class of 2026, de-



serves to be the first Saint to earn his gold jacket on the first ballot. As the representative for New Orleans on the Pro Football Hall of Fame selection committee, it's my duty to make the presentation

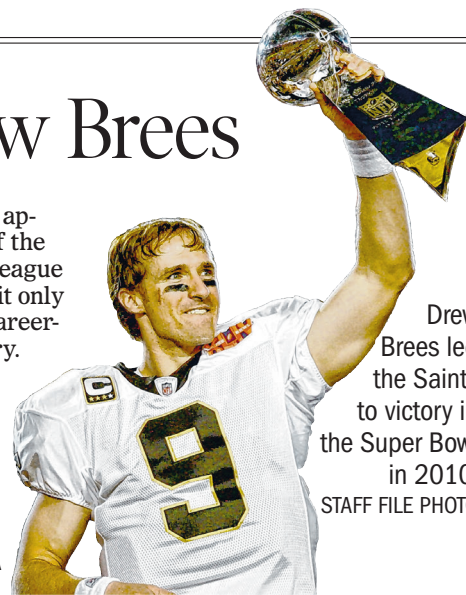
for Brees to the rest of the group. I didn't need 5 minutes to make the case for his Hall of Fame candidacy.

Brees' resume speaks for itself. It stands out, even when compared to the game's legends. His career was one of the most significant in NFL history.

When Brees arrived in 2006, the Saints were a moribund franchise. He took a team that had gone 3-13 the year before and led it to a division title and its first

NFC Championship Game appearance, authoring one of the greatest turnarounds the league has ever seen. And he did it only months removed from a career-threatening shoulder injury. He finished second in the voting for the league's Most Valuable Player, Offensive Player of the Year and Comeback Player of the Year awards.

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Drew Brees led the Saints to victory in the Super Bowl in 2010. STAFF FILE PHOTO

