



## Senators grill Kennedy over CDC chaos

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# The News-Star

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## Why electricity bills are so high now

Presley Bo Tyler

Shreveport Times  
USA TODAY NETWORK

If your utility bill has increased recently, you're not alone. Electricity costs are, on average, 5.5% higher today than a year ago and natural gas has increased by 13.8%, according to data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

U.S. citizens are paying more for electricity this summer due in part to a combination of extreme temperatures and the expansion of data centers needed to support the increase of artificial intelligence usage, USA Today reported. From May 2024 to May 2025, the average residential price for one kilowatt-hour of electricity increased almost 6.5%, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA).

**Why are electricity bills going up? What to know about energy and natural gas prices in Louisiana**

Electricity costs can vary due to energy rates, taxes and utility fees in an area, with nearly 60 utility companies set to increase electricity rates this year, which will affect more than 57 million citizens, CBS News reported. In Louisiana, the average residential

electricity prices increased 14.1% between May 2024 and May 2025, according to data from the EIA. Many factors can influence the price of electricity, such as fuel prices, power plant costs, weather conditions like extreme temperatures, transmission and distribution system, as well as unregulated and regulated prices, according to

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## LA promotes gun sales with Second Amendment tax break

Greg Hilburn Shreveport Times | USA TODAY NETWORK

Louisiana's only sales tax holiday celebrates the Second Amendment by promoting gun ownership Sept. 5 through Sept. 7 with a tax break for consumers and a sales spike for retailers. • The Second Amendment Sales Tax Holiday suspends both local and state taxes for firearms, ammunition and hunting supplies Friday, Sept. 5, Saturday, Sept. 6 and Sunday, Sept. 7. • Most consumers will save 10% percent or more depending on local sales tax rates.

Corey Grigson, who owns Pawn Pros in Monroe, is preparing for the sales tax weekend with a large display of guns at his store. "It definitely drives sales for us," Grigson said in an interview with USA Today Network. Richie McKinney, who owns McKinney Outdoor Superstore in Ruston, said the holiday is "our biggest weekend of the year." The sales tax exemption applies to all consumer purchases of firearms, ammunition and specified hunting supplies, including archery items, hunting apparel and certain types of knives. Purchases that aren't eligible for the sales tax ex-

emption include hunting dogs, animal feed, off-road vehicles and vessels such as airboats. An estimated 53.1% of adults in the Louisiana have guns at home, the 13th highest level among states, according to Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, which measures only licensed weapons. Visit [www.revenue.louisiana.gov/SecondAmendment](http://www.revenue.louisiana.gov/SecondAmendment) for more information, including special provisions and complete lists of eligible and ineligible purchases. Greg Hilburn covers state politics for the USA TODAY Network of Louisiana. Follow him on Twitter @GregHilburn1.

**Corey Grigson, owner of Pawn Pros in Monroe, is pictured at his store on Sept. 2.** GREG HILBURN/USA TODAY NETWORK

## Three U.S. states form vaccine alliance

Aim is to present credible info amid turmoil at CDC

Terry Collins  
USA TODAY

Responding to the federal government's shifting guidance on vaccines and turmoil at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, health officials in California, Oregon and Washington state have formed a new West Coast Health Alliance. The alliance's goal is to "ensure residents remain protected by science, not politics," according to a joint announcement Sept. 3 from California Gov. Gavin Newsom, Oregon Gov. Tina Kotek and Washington Gov. Bob Ferguson. The three Democratic governors said the alliance will provide recommendations to residents on immunizations and ensure the public gets credible information on vaccine safety and efficacy. The governors called the partnership a unified response to what they called the Trump administration's "destruction" of the CDC, the federal agency responsible for vaccine guidance. "President Trump's mass firing of CDC doctors and scientists – and his blatant politicization of the agency – is a direct assault on the health and safety of the American people," the governors said in a statement. "The CDC has become a political tool that increasingly peddles ideology instead of science, ideology that will lead to severe health consequences. California, Oregon, and Washington will not allow the people of our states to be put at risk."

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**Protesters rally against the Trump administration's health care policies in front of the National Institutes of Health on May 10 in Bethesda, Maryland.** KAYLA BARTKOWSKI/GETTY IMAGES FILE

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