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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Superior Court rejects Secretary of State's draft ballot language for public power referendum

March 9, 2023 - In [an opinion issued yesterday by the Cumberland County Superior Court](#), the court ruled against the Secretary of State's draft wording of the ballot question for the Our Power referendum, which replaces Central Maine Power and Versant Power with a nonprofit, consumer-owned utility.

The court found that [the Secretary's question wording](#), and in particular its use of the phrase "quasi-governmental," is misleading to voters and risks confusing them at the polls.

The original complaint was filed by members of Our Power, the campaign advocating for the new utility: Sen. Rick Bennett (R-Oxford); John Clark, former General Manager of Houlton Water Company, Sen. Nicole Grohoski (D-Ellsworth); and Wayne Jortner, lead petitioner for the Our Power initiative and former Senior Counsel for the Public Advocate.

John Clark of Linneus said, "I'm thrilled to see the court take the side of common sense on this one. Who knows what "quasi-governmental" means anyway? Up in the Houlton area, where electricity is less than half the cost of CMP, we do know the value of consumer-owned utilities, and that's what the Pine Tree Power Company will be. The ballot question should say exactly that."

Wayne Jortner of Freeport also responded to the decision: "From my time at the Public Advocate's Office, I can tell you, electric companies in Maine are either consumer-owned or they're investor-owned. There's just no better way to describe them."

He continued: "No matter how you slice it, quasi-governmental is not only confusing but also factually incorrect. There will be no government employees, government managers, or government ownership associated with the new consumer-owned utility."

In fact, it is our current investor-owned utilities that have substantial, and foreign, government ownership.”

The Court has remanded the language back to the Secretary of State, who can either revise the language according to the decision or appeal the decision to the Law Court for further examination.

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Our Power is a group of Maine ratepayers, business leaders, energy experts, conservationists, and others committed to putting the Pine Tree State’s energy future in the hands of Mainers. Bios of those quoted above are at ourpowermaine.org/about-us.