

Cleco offers energy-saving tips for cold weather

PINEVILLE, La. – Jan. 3, 2022 – As colder temperatures begin to impact many parts of Cleco's service territory, the company is providing tips to help customers lower their energy usage during the winter months.

"While the temperatures in Louisiana continue to fluctuate, the winter season is officially here," said Jaci Sewell, Cleco's energy efficiency program manager. "We want our customers to be aware of things they can do to lower their energy usage and still keep their homes and businesses warm when the temperature drops."

Tips to conserve energy and stay warm during the cold winter months:

- Set your thermostat no higher than 68 degrees Fahrenheit, if possible.
- Find and seal leaks. This helps keep the heat indoors.
- Inspect and replace air filters. This should be done monthly. Dirty air filters force heating systems to work harder for proper airflow, using extra energy.
- Use Light Emitting Diode (LED) bulbs. LEDs are brighter, last longer and use less energy. Discounts available at www.clecomarketplace.com.
- Install a programmable thermostat. Discounts available at www.clecomarketplace.com.

- Open drapes, shades and curtains during the day to take advantage of solar heat.

Close drapes, shades and curtains at night to retain heat inside. For more energy efficiency tips, visit www.cleco.com and take advantage of Cleco's energy efficiency program, Power Wise™.

Cleco Corporate Holdings LLC is a regional energy holding company that conducts its business operations through its subsidiaries, Cleco Power LLC and Cleco Cajun LLC. Cleco Power is a regulated electric public utility company that owns 9 generating units with a rated capacity of 3,035 MWs and serves approximately 290,000 customers in Louisiana through its retail business and supplies wholesale power in Louisiana and Mississippi. Cleco Cajun is an unregulated utility company that owns 14 generating units with a rated capacity of 3,379 MWs, and wholesale contracts serving nine Louisiana cooperatives, two wholesale municipal customers and one electric utility. For more information about Cleco, visit us at www.cleco.com.

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Louisiana AG's office will present SCOTUS arguments against Biden's CMS vaccine mandate



Pictured above is Louisiana Attorney General Jeff Landry
Photo credit: Melinda Deslatte / AP

(The Center Square) – Louisiana Attorney General Jeff Landry's office will present oral arguments at the U.S. Supreme Court on Friday against President Joe Biden's COVID-19 vaccination mandate for health care workers.

The court will hear oral arguments on both the health care worker mandate, which was enacted through the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), and Biden's employer vaccination mandate for businesses with 100 or more employees, enacted through the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).

Landry has led coalitions of states against the CMS and OSHA mandates, as well as multistate opposition to vaccination mandates for federal contractors and Head Start program staff.

Landry's office will present opposing remarks to Biden's CMS mandate Friday along with Missouri Attorney General Eric Schmitt's office.

"The rule of law is on our side, and I look forward to preventing the federal government from imposing medical tyranny on our citizens and turning last year's healthcare heroes into this year's unemployed," Landry said in a statement.

"This is one of the most consequential cases in history – my office has been a leader in pushing back on outrageous federal overreach, and we're confident we will prevail again at the nation's highest court," Schmitt said.

The CMS mandate was implemented through an Interim Final Rule in November. It applies to full-time employees, part-time employees, volunteers and contractors at health care facilities that participate in Medicare and Medicaid programs, affecting an estimated 76,000 health providers.

Landry won an injunction against the mandate in the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Louisiana. Schmitt won an identical injunction in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Missouri.

The Biden administration appealed the rulings, and the Supreme Court will decide whether to stay the injunctions – block the mandate from taking effect during ongoing legal battles – or allow it to be implemented as scheduled.

The administration originally required affected health providers to develop compliance policies by Dec. 6 and ensure all eligible staff members be fully vaccinated – either two doses of Pfizer or Moderna or one dose of Johnson & Johnson – by Jan. 4.

CMS delayed the compliance deadlines until Jan. 27 (instead of Dec. 6, 2021) and Feb. 28 (instead of Jan. 4) pending further litigation.

The court will hear separate oral arguments regarding the OSHA employer mandate.

Louisiana businessman Brandon Trosclair sued the administration after the OSHA mandate was issued in November. He won an injunction in the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, though it was later dissolved in the 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

Trosclair, an Ascension Parish resident, employs nearly 500 people across 15 grocery stores in Louisiana and Mississippi. He's represented by the Liberty Justice Center and the Pelican Institute for Public Policy, based in New Orleans.

"When I found out that we would be held to the mandate, to me it was a fairly obvious thing to get involved because the government was putting me in a position to terminate employees for not taking the vaccine or do multiple testings every week," he said in a previous phone interview.

Oral arguments begin at 9 a.m. CST Friday and will be streamed live on C-SPAN.

Louisiana's maximum unemployment benefit increases 11% in 2022

(The Center Square) – An unemployment compromise will deliver an 11% maximum increase in unemployment benefits for out-of-work Louisianans, starting this week.

Gov. John Bel Edwards agreed to end federal unemployment benefits tied to COVID-19 relief funding five weeks early last year in exchange for the GOP-controlled Legislature's commitment to permanently increase benefits at the state level.

The result was Act 276 and the first jobless benefit increase in more than a decade.

"We have one of the lowest unemployment benefit amounts in the country, and it's been more than 10 years since we've raised the amount of money people can collect," Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) Secretary Ava Cates said. "In that time, the cost of everything from gas to groceries has gone up."

The new maximum weekly benefit is \$275, an increase of \$28 a week.

Cates said individuals filing a claim on or after Jan. 2 will see the increase. Claims filed Jan. 1 will be backdated to Dec. 26.

Cates said the timing of the change will require many recipients to reapply as Sunday marked the beginning of a new eligibility quarter.

"The first Sunday in every calendar quarter marks a change in the period of time used to determine eligibility for unemployment benefits based on wages," she said.

Twenty-six states ended the \$300-a-week federal unemployment enhancement before its scheduled expiration Sept. 6. Edwards was the only Democratic governor to do so, effective July 31.

Business groups, Republican

lawmakers and other critics of the federal unemployment payments said the benefits discouraged workers from reentering the labor force.

A statement from the Baton Rouge Area Chamber of Commerce during the compromise negotiations said the federal enhancement made sense when businesses were shut down during the pandemic, but not when the government-imposed lockdowns were lifted.

"The weekly payment, combined with state unemployment assistance, is currently the equivalent of almost \$14 per hour, which is nearly median individual income in the state. In other words, one can be in the middle of the pack in terms of earnings by not working," the statement said.

Legislative Democrats were split on the issue.

"I just can't believe you're doing this, turning down federal unemployment for people who have had the hardest year of their life," Rep. Mandie Landry, D-New Orleans, told her colleagues during debate on the floor.

Rep. Chad Brown, D-Plaquemine, who sponsored House Bill 183, or what would become Act 276, said he had "heartburn" over the tradeoff but that "a permanent increase going forward is desperately needed."

The Senate approved the measure, 32-5, on the last day of the 2021 legislative session, while the House approved it 74-27. Edwards signed the legislation June 15, 2021.



VOTERS OF WARD 3,

It seems like the voting for Ward 3 police jury member has been in effect for numerous months now. Well, it is finally coming to an end. This Saturday, January 15th, is your last opportunity to cast your vote in this election for Ward 3 Police Jury Member.

I, Deborah McCormack, have been serving in this position for the past year. I have worked very hard to implement changes for the betterment of our Ward and our parish. If elected, I will continue to ride the roads to report issues that need to be fixed, be hands on with concerns brought to me that need attention, attend every meeting and class that is made possible, work diligently to decrease the garbage FEE that is presently implemented, plus so much more.

I am able and willing to dedicate the time needed to properly serve as your police jury member. I want to see our Ward and parish improve and grow.

Please, go to the polls this Saturday, January 15th, and cast your vote for me,

Deborah McCormack #3.

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