

## Aaron Bernstine

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**From:** Melanie Kuchta <[REDACTED]@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, July 14, 2017 2:16 PM  
**To:** Aaron Bernstine  
**Subject:** Ellwood Electric Issue

Hello Aaron,

I would like to start this by thanking you for everything that you have done and are doing for your constituents. It is so amazing to have someone representing us who is so willing to go to bat for us and our families with very real concerns.

As for myself, I am a single mother who is relatively new to the area. We moved to Ellwood City three years ago. I'm a very proud person and don't usually like asking for or getting help from people. I like to prove to myself and everyone else that I can do this on my own and to be a good example of hard work to my son. I'll also be the first to admit that I don't always get it right. Obviously, there are a plethora of issues with Ellwood City Electric. We've all had our fair share of complaints. Recently, however, I was definitely pushed to a breaking point. I have paid my bill late before. At one point, I even had to get my landlord's permission because I wouldn't have been able to get my bill paid until 3 days after the shut off date. At any rate, the bill has always been paid. Most recently, I had received a notice with a shut off date of Wednesday, July 12<sup>th</sup> at 9:00am stating that payments needed to be received before then. It's been especially frustrating to get these bills paid recently since the online pay option has been down for months. I work a full time job half an hour away from home and am rarely in Ellwood City when the electric office is open. I also do not have checks. So, on Tuesday, July 11<sup>th</sup> when my shift was over at 8:30pm, I went to purchase a money order for the electric balance due. I went home, put it in to an envelope and made sure the account number was on the envelope in large numbers, as well as on the money order itself. That evening, I drove to the municipal building and placed my payment in the drop box for utility payments.

The next morning (7/12/2017), I didn't have to leave for work until 10:15am. When I left, my electricity was still on. My shift was over at 8:30pm again, so I didn't make it home until a little after 9:00. To my dismay, I had no power. I live in an upstairs apartment, so it gets quite warm rather quickly. I checked online for an after-hours phone number, but could not find one. I also left a voicemail for the electric department. I had to leave for work the following morning at 7:15 and I needed to charge my phone (which is my only alarm clock) and get ready as well. So, that evening, I had to find someone who would allow me to crash on their couch. The frustration and anger that I had felt was overwhelming. I had been through a lot of overwhelming personal stress over the few weeks leading up to this and I felt like this had been my breaking point. I paid my bill, and here I was, without electricity. Thankfully, my son was spending the night with his dad.

On the morning of Wednesday, July 13<sup>th</sup>, I called the electric office shortly after 8:00am when they open. I gave them my information and was told that someone would be sent out right away to reconnect my electricity. There was no apology for their error or for the terrible inconvenience. This, I think, just made me feel worse about everything.

At my job, such a grave error that causes such devastation to a customer could be grounds for dismissal. At any financial institution, payments need to be accounted for and processed *prior* to the institution opening for the day. The shut off time noted on the delinquent notice was 9:00am and by 10:15, it was still on. My money order was dropped off around 9:30pm. There were over 12 hours which the employees at the office could have collected the payments from the drop box, posted the payment to the account, and taken my name off of the shut off list.

This level of incompetence is completely unacceptable and extremely disheartening for a company that is run by a municipal government. We are told to trust our leaders, that they have our best interests at heart. If this is how things are done, I fear for the future of this little community.

Thank you, again, for your time and for everything that you do for all of us.

Sincerely,

Melanie Kuchta