

U.S. House Bills on Refrigerator and Dishwasher Standards Would Raise Costs for Families

July 2024

The U.S. House of Representatives is expected to vote in the second week of July on two bills that would effectively undo recent energy efficiency standards and raise total costs for households.

Representatives are [set](#) to vote on H.R. 7637 (“Refrigerator Freedom Act”) and H.R. 7700 (“Stop Unaffordable Dishwasher Standards Act”). These bills would effectively undo energy efficiency standards for refrigerators and dishwashers that were recently finalized by the Department of Energy (DOE). Both standards would save households far more money on utility bills than they would cost in any increased purchase prices.

Bill proponents say they want to make sure new standards are technologically feasible and economically justified and save a significant amount of energy or water, but that’s what current law already requires. DOE’s standards, including for refrigerators and dishwashers, meet and exceed these requirements.

The bills are a significant threat, though, because they effectively prohibit DOE from considering the cost savings from standards. They would prohibit enforcing the standards if they raise the purchase price of some models by even a penny, regardless of the magnitude of the utility cost savings they provide. Therefore, they would effectively undo the standards that were set to take effect—raising costs for families.

A recent [YouGov poll](#) found that 58% of respondents support “setting tougher energy efficiency standards for appliances,” while 16% are not sure and only 26% are opposed.

Refrigerator standards set to reduce costs, emissions

Efficiency standards for home refrigerators and freezers finalized by DOE in December will ensure new models use significantly less energy while maintaining today’s latest features and sizes. They were supported by the manufacturers and will take effect in February 2029 for most product types and February 2030 for others.

Saving money for consumers

The updated standards will save U.S. consumers \$36 billion on utility bills from the use of new models sold over 30 years, according to DOE. Most new models will use 10–15% less energy than their lowest-performing counterparts sold in stores today. Purchasers of all new model types will save significantly more on utility bills than any increase in purchase price; for common model types, consumers will save between \$51 and \$143 on average over the lifetime of their refrigerator.

Making better refrigerators

Most new models are expected to use variable-speed compressors (found in some models today). These compressors run longer at a lower speed, which means they stop and start less frequently, keeping foods at more consistent temperatures.



Protecting the environment

The refrigerator standards will avert 101 million metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions from power plants over 30 years of product sales.

Dishwasher standards set to reduce costs, maintain performance

Dishwasher standards finalized by DOE in April were supported by the manufacturers. They will bring less efficient new models up to the energy and water efficiency of their better-performing peers. Each of the largest manufacturers makes models that already meet these standards. The standards will take effect in 2027.

Saving money for consumers

The dishwasher standards will save consumers \$3 billion on utility bills from units sold over 30 years. Dishwashers meeting the new standards will quickly pay back any increase in upfront price by reducing consumers' water and energy bills.

DOE estimated that the price increase for standard-size dishwashers going from the lowest efficiency allowed today (which make up only 7% of current sales) to the minimum efficiency required under the new standards will be \$26, which will pay back in under four years through reduced utility bills, generating savings for users across most of a product's life. And the price of most of today's dishwashers is not expected to increase at all. Many already meet the new standards, while others will only need programming modifications. Users of these latter models will see monthly bill savings at no cost.

Maintaining strong cleaning performance

Dishwashers' water and energy use have decreased significantly over recent decades, thanks to federal standards and manufacturers' innovations, and cleaning performance has improved during the same period. Wirecutter has found that "modern dishwashers have never been better at removing grime."

DOE's testing found that models that meet the new standards and provide very good cleaning performance are readily available on the market today. Most models with five-star cleaning ratings from Consumer Reports already meet the new standards.

Reducing climate-warming emissions

The dishwasher standards are set to avert 9.5 million metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions from power plants over 30 years of product sales.

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