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BEFORE THE
ILLINOIS COMMERCE COMMISSION

PUBLIC FORUM

CENTRAL ILLINOIS LIGHT COMPANY)	DOCKET NO.
d/b/a AmerenCILCO	)	07-0585
)	
Proposed general increase in)	
electric delivery service rates.)	
)	
CENTRAL ILLINOIS PUBLIC SERVICE	)	DOCKET NO.
COMPANY d/b/a AmerenCIPS	)	07-0586
)	
Proposed general increase in)	
electric delivery service rates.)	
)	
ILLINOIS POWER COMPANY d/b/a	)	DOCKET NO.
AmerenIP	)	07-0587
)	
Proposed general increase in)	
electric delivery service rates.)	
)	
CENTRAL ILLINOIS LIGHT COMPANY	)	DOCKET NO.
d/b/a AmerenCILCO	)	07-0588
)	
Proposed general increase in gas)	
delivery service rates.)	
)	
CENTRAL ILLINOIS PUBLIC SERVICE	)	DOCKET NO.
COMPANY d/b/a AmerenCIPS	)	07-0589
)	
Proposed general increase in gas)	
delivery service rates.)	
)	
ILLINOIS POWER COMPANY d/b/a	)	DOCKET NO.
AmerenIP	)	07-0590
)	
Proposed general increase in gas)	
delivery service rates.)	

Decatur, Illinois
Monday, February 11, 2008
7:00 p.m.

BEFORE: MR. ROBERT BENSKO, Chief Public Forum Officer

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21	SULLIVAN REPORTING COMPANY, by	
	Carla J. Boehl, Reporter	
22	Ln. #084-002710	

1 Ameren's electric and natural gas utility business.
2 This public hearing is only one part of the process
3 of review of the Company's rate proposal. A formal
4 proceeding is also taking place in Springfield with
5 filed testimony and responses to that testimony.

6 Once the Company files its request
7 with the Commerce Commission, the case is assigned a
8 docket. That Docket Number is 07-0585, and it will
9 be assigned an administrative law judge to hear all
10 arguments in the case. That case that's being held
11 in Springfield is just like a court of law. You have
12 the defense and the plaintiff, sort of. You have
13 people arguing on the part of the Company and people
14 arguing on the part of the Staff of the Illinois
15 Commerce Commission. Also, I think Intervenors are
16 the Attorney General and I think AARP is part of this
17 case, too. So they are arguing this case and just
18 like a court of law.

19 So that you don't have to come to us
20 in Springfield, we decided that we needed to do some
21 public hearings. So what we do is we come to you.
22 We come to your town and we ask you for your

1 comments. And those comments are made part of the
2 public record of the file and they are filed in the
3 public record of the file in the Chief Clerk's
4 office. And those records are made available to the
5 Chairman and Commissioners and all the parties that
6 are part of this case, to the Commission Staff and
7 anyone that wants to have those.

8 Tonight if you are going to speak,
9 there is some green cards that were -- I think they
10 are green -- green cards that were passed out. On
11 those green cards on the back it states -- it has
12 something to follow along in the case. It has our
13 website, it has the case number, and it tells you
14 from your computer at home how you can follow along
15 that case that's being held in Springfield, from your
16 computer at home. So you can track the case as it
17 goes through our process.

18 Once that process is over, the
19 Administrative Law Judge writes what we call a
20 proposed order. He presents or she presents that
21 proposed order to the Chairman and Commissioners.
22 There is a Chairman and there is four Commissioners.

1 They are appointed by the Governor and confirmed by
2 the Senate. They either tell the Administrative Law
3 Judge that they want him to go or her to go back and
4 look at some other aspect of the case or they might
5 say we are going to, you know, rule in a different
6 manner.

7 That case, the process from the time
8 that the Company files the case and is given that
9 number, there is an eleven-month clock on that. So
10 this case has to be heard and taken and voted upon by
11 September 30 or it goes in automatically. The
12 Commission never let's something go in automatically.
13 They always hit the target date.

14 The parties that I was talking to you
15 about includes the ICC Staff. They are the
16 accountants and the financial analysts, the engineers
17 and economists. They join in to offer their
18 professional point of view on the evidence filed in
19 the case.

20 Once the Commerce Commission decision
21 is made, that decision may be challenged. One of the
22 parties to the case might ask to reopen the case and

1 the Chairman and Commissioners can either grant it or
2 deny it. If they grant it, then there has to be a
3 specific reason why it is opened, and that reason is
4 argued before the Commission again.

5 Once the case is heard and taken and
6 voted upon and if people aren't satisfied with that,
7 the next highest court, the next place that you can
8 take it to, is the Appellate Court. And the
9 Commission in the past has been taken to the
10 Appellate Court for some of the decisions that they
11 have made.

12 I have already -- I did one public
13 hearing already in Marion last Thursday night. I
14 have got to apologize for not holding this a week
15 ago. But the weather was kind of bad, and I was
16 thinking not only for the safety of the people
17 coming, but for us driving over from Springfield, our
18 safety, too. I have been doing these public
19 hearings, and I have done hundreds of them. I
20 started in 1990 doing public hearings. That is the
21 first one I have ever had to re-schedule.

22 But, look, we have got a roomful of

1 people tonight. We are happy about that, and that's
2 all that matters. We re-scheduled it. You guys got
3 here. Hopefully, we will be out of here before it
4 starts snowing, and you will be heard tonight.

5 I run these hearings very openly, and
6 I urge anyone and everyone to come up and speak
7 tonight. I want to make this as innocuous as
8 possible. I want everybody in the room to feel
9 comfortable, to feel that they are able to speak on
10 the record and that that record will be made part of
11 this case.

12 And that's why I am here. That's the
13 reason why I don't make you come to me; I come to
14 you. And I do this at night so that you have a
15 chance to get home, so that you have a chance to get
16 a bite to eat, and then you can come out. We try to
17 make it as simple as possible.

18 We at the Commission feel that your
19 comments are very important, and that's why we come
20 to you. Saying that, there will, I am sure, be some
21 people that speak tonight that some of you may not
22 agree with. And that's okay. But I am going to ask

1 you, no matter who steps up to that microphone, they
2 are just like you. They have a family, they have a
3 job, whatever. Please treat them with the same
4 respect that you would want to be treated.

5 I am not saying that you have to agree
6 with what they are saying. What I am saying is
7 please respect whoever steps up to the microphone
8 tonight. You will be doing yourself a favor, and you
9 will be doing me a favor so I don't have to call you
10 out of order.

11 I opened the public record and there
12 is two portion of tonight's case. The first portion
13 the court reporter will take an accurate record. The
14 second portion is a very informal question and answer
15 period. During that question and answer period, Gene
16 and I, Gene Beyer from the Commerce Commission, and
17 myself and Randy Nehrt will be available to answer
18 any questions that you might have of the Commission.

19 Ameren has brought a number of people
20 with them tonight and they, too, will be able to
21 answer questions in the question and answer period.
22 But the first part, because there is no provision in

1 state law for cross examination or anything, and I am
2 not going to swear anybody in tonight, you cannot --
3 we cannot allow the question and answer period to be
4 on the record.

5 So the first portion we are going to
6 talk about one thing and one thing only. I am only
7 allowed to talk about what's before the Commission.
8 I had a gentleman ask me to speak on another matter
9 tonight. I cannot allow that because that's not why
10 I am here.

11 I will open the public record, and I
12 will call each of you that has signed up in the order
13 in which your name appears on the sheet. The court
14 reporter will be making an accurate record. When you
15 step up to that microphone, I ask you to do a couple
16 of things. State your name and spell it so that the
17 court reporter has an accurate record. Speak into
18 the microphone so that everybody in the room can hear
19 you. You are making this testimony to me tonight.
20 So I want you to make that testimony to me, not to
21 the citizens in the room.

22 Some of you might clap and, you know,

1 do things tonight. That's okay. But hold it to a
2 minimum, if you could, because we have got a number
3 of people that want to speak. We want to let
4 everybody get their comments in. We want to give
5 everybody a chance to do what they want to do tonight
6 at this public hearing, and we want to be respectful
7 of anybody that steps up to the microphone. When you
8 come up there, like I said, state your name and spell
9 it so that the court reporter has an accurate record.

10 I have heard hundreds of these
11 hearings. Like I said, yours was the first one I
12 ever had to re-schedule. And in doing hundreds of
13 these, I can see how the public reacts, I can see how
14 the companies react, and I can see how the ICC reacts
15 to the customers.

16 We try to do these things in concert
17 with your state reps. If a state rep asks us, you
18 know, we do these public hearings on our own, but if
19 the state rep asks us to have a hearing in their
20 particular area, we try to do that. We try to make
21 these public hearings within a 45-minute drive, you
22 know, of places so that people can, you know, get

1 here and say their piece.

2 This is the second in a series of
3 public hearings. We have six altogether. I am going
4 to be in Belleville this coming Thursday. I can't
5 remember where else I am going to be. But we are
6 going to do six of them total.

7 Right now -- or before I go into it,
8 Randy Nehrt, I spoke of him a little while ago, he
9 works for us, and he is head of external affairs
10 which deals with consumer services problems. If you
11 have a billing or service problem and you need to
12 talk to somebody about that tonight, you can talk to
13 Randy. He represents the Illinois Commerce
14 Commission.

15 In just a second I am going to call up
16 a representative from the Company, and the Company
17 has set up a table right outside this room. If you
18 have a billing or service problem, they can take care
19 of that. And then someone from the Company is going
20 to talk to you about some assistance programs also
21 tonight.

22 So now I would like to call upon Craig

1 Nelson. Craig is the Vice President of Regulatory
2 Affairs and Financial Services for Ameren. And he is
3 going to give us some opening remarks. He is going
4 to do a presentation up here and tell you why the
5 Company is asking the Commission for this increase.

6 So, Craig?

7 MR. NELSON: Good evening, folks. Can you hear
8 me?

9 Thank you, Mr. Bensko, for that
10 introduction, and thank you for making these
11 arrangements for this public forum. We at Ameren
12 welcome the opportunity to come and explain why we
13 filed these rate cases.

14 Again, my name is Craig Nelson. I
15 have worked for the Ameren Illinois utilities for
16 over 28 years now, and I have some people here with
17 me that will help answer your questions later. Stan
18 Ogden is here, Bill Prebble and Bob Mill, and I will
19 be up here later trying to answer your questions.

20 In fact, Stan Ogden, our VP of
21 customer service is going to talk to you about rate
22 relief assistance programs we have right now.

1 MR. OGDEN: Thank you, Craig. I will just try
2 to speak loudly.

3 Now I won't have to speak so loudly.

4 If you could put the next slide up, I
5 just want to discuss with you a few things. First,
6 our commitment. Our commitment is to provide
7 cost-efficient, reliable, safe services to our
8 customers. And, secondly, we are looking to achieve
9 high levels of customer satisfaction.

10 To that point, something that I would
11 like to tell you about is the fact that we do have
12 customer service representatives here tonight. We
13 have got a table set up. We have got representatives
14 from our three customer service centers. The Ameren
15 Illinois utilities have customer service centers in
16 Peoria; Sue is here tonight from the Peoria contact
17 center. Decatur also has a representative here, and
18 we have a customer service center, a call center, in
19 Pawnee just south of Springfield. So those
20 representatives are here to answer your questions.

21 In fact, I know we had a gentleman in
22 earlier that before the hearing came in, approached

1 the table and had a question about budget billing.
2 So any question, we want to take that from you
3 tonight. Don't feel that you have to turn your green
4 card and ask the question on the microphone. If you
5 have got a question about your bill, certainly seek
6 us out.

7 Another fact that I would like to
8 bring to your attention, as Bob mentioned, there are
9 assistance programs available to you. For many years
10 the Illinois Power service territory has had the Warm
11 Neighbors Program. That is a program that is
12 available. Since 1982 that program has been
13 available.

14 But something that you may not know
15 about is last year part of the legislative cinema
16 made available millions of dollars in energy
17 assistance programs, and those programs are
18 available. Typically, you think of low income being
19 eligible. But this is new information. Those
20 programs are also available for people above the
21 federal poverty guidelines, and I am going to throw
22 some numbers at you just to kind of give you a sense

1 of who is eligible.

2 The program is available for 400
3 percent above the federal poverty guidelines, and
4 what that amounts to is, say it is a husband and a
5 wife, a family of two. If you are making less than
6 \$55,000, there is dollars that could be available to
7 you. A family of four, for example, if you are
8 making \$82,000 or less a year, there are programs
9 that could be available for you as well.

10 So I want you to take advantage of
11 those programs. I would like to use this forum as an
12 opportunity to point out that there are assistance
13 dollars available. And the last thing we want is
14 those dollars to go unused. We are looking for uses,
15 for people that need help that need assistance.
16 There is residential hardship dollars available.
17 There is residential special circumstances dollars
18 that have been made available. So it is our
19 commitment to help you, to help you find affordable
20 energy in your budget.

21 You will be hearing more about energy
22 efficiency. The Company has made a commitment to

1 energy efficiency measures. You will be hearing more
2 about that later this year as well.

3 So I don't want to take a lot of time
4 here, but I do want you to know that there are
5 assistance programs available. If there is a way
6 that we can talk to you tonight, we would like to do
7 that.

8 With that I will hand it back to
9 Craig.

10 MR. NELSON: Thank you, Stan.

11 And let's go on to the next slide,
12 please.

13 Our purpose here is fairly simple. We
14 are here to explain the rate case, explain why we
15 need an overall increase in rates. We are here to
16 talk about benefits for customers. Our panel is here
17 to answer your questions, and we are here to listen
18 to your comments.

19 Let's spend just a few minutes talking
20 about the Ameren Illinois utilities. And we can look
21 at the service map and see the red is CILCO, green is
22 Illinois Power, and the gold color is CIPS. Each of

1 our companies has been around for about a hundred
2 years. We serve 85 of the 102 counties in Illinois.
3 We serve 1.2 million electric and 840,000 gas
4 customers.

5 By the way, the panel of people that
6 will be talking to you later all live in Illinois,
7 all work for the Ameren Illinois utilities. There is
8 some confusion on that issue. Our holding company
9 Ameren owns a Missouri utility. We don't work for
10 the Missouri utility. And the holding company also
11 owns a generating company with power plants. We
12 don't work for that company. We work for the
13 delivery companies, the Ameren Illinois utilities.

14 Now, there is something that you
15 should know about our Ameren Illinois utilities. We
16 do not own power plants, and we do not own natural
17 gas injection wells. That means we have to go to the
18 market to buy electricity and gas, and we only buy
19 the amount of electricity and gas that you, our
20 customers, use. And there is no profit on those
21 purchases. Whatever we pay for electricity and gas,
22 that's what we bill customers. Instead, our profit

1 comes from the investment we make in delivering
2 electricity and gas to you.

3 Let's talk for a moment about the rate
4 relief legislation and the legislative process that
5 occurred this past summer. And there was an
6 agreement reached with lawmakers and there was
7 legislation passed, and it dealt with power
8 purchases. And that legislation provides a very
9 significant amount of rate relief and assistance to
10 customers, and Stan talked about that. In fact, it
11 is \$488 million of credit and rate relief over a
12 four-year period and that relates to power purchases,
13 once again.

14 In the midst of the negotiations of
15 that agreement and passing that legislation, we did
16 inform lawmakers that we would be filing these
17 delivery service rate cases for the delivery of
18 electricity, not the purchase of electricity. And we
19 continue to provide the full amount of that credit,
20 those credits, in that rate relief and we hope that
21 the credits will help soften the impact of these
22 delivery service rate increases.

1 We made a pledge to lawmakers that we
2 would not ask for an electric residential increase of
3 more than single digit. And by that I mean no ten
4 percent or more increases. In fact, at AmerenIP we
5 kept our word and we capped the electric residential
6 customer segment at eight and a half percent, just
7 like we said we would do.

8 Okay. To help you understand what our
9 rate case is about, we are going to go through a
10 dollar slide that shows where each dollar of revenue
11 that we receive from you goes. So there are three
12 segments here. \$.42 goes for the purchase of
13 electricity. \$.22 goes for the purchase of natural
14 gals, and let's stop there for a moment. Remember, I
15 said that the purchase of electricity and gas, there
16 is no profit. That's what we purchase is what we
17 charge. There is no profit.

18 And, remember, we talked about the
19 rate relief credits, the 448 million. Well, that
20 relates to this piece, the purchase of electricity.
21 It does not relate to the gas. And then the third
22 component, it doesn't relate to the delivery piece.

1 It's the delivery piece that we have
2 before the Illinois Commerce Commission now. And
3 what we are showing the Commerce Commission are 2006
4 actual operating costs and asking them to adjust our
5 rates up to that level. And our operating costs
6 include the costs to operate the company, to maintain
7 the company, the projects for reliability, interest,
8 taxes and so on. And we are also asking the ICC for
9 a fair return on the investment our investors make.

10 We know that people don't like price
11 increases. I know I don't like price increase. And
12 we carefully weighed our options before filing this
13 rate case, these rate cases. We considered the
14 impact on our stakeholders, including our customers,
15 and we truly think it is in the best interest of all
16 the stakeholders, including the customers, to file
17 these rate cases.

18 We have asked the ICC to approve an
19 overall seven percent increase in our revenues. And
20 I will explain why in just a moment. Let's move on.
21 Of course, when we ask for a revenue increase it
22 impacts customer rates, and we have a couple of

1 slides where we will show you the impact for the
2 combination customer that uses electric and gas, and
3 then an all electric customer.

4 This one is a combination customer,
5 and this is the average monthly adjustment for this
6 typical residential electric and natural gas
7 customer, and we stated that average monthly usage is
8 a small to medium three-family home, what a customer
9 would use. And we know that not everybody is
10 typical, and we know that month to month use will
11 vary, but this is just an example.

12 You can see from the three boxes, and
13 let's focus on Ameren IP, assuming the Commission
14 would approve every dollar we have asked for, this
15 would be the average monthly adjustment for an
16 AmerenIP customer. The electric portion of the bill
17 would go up by 7.75 and the gas portion of the bill
18 would go up by 8.67 a month.

19 Next slide, please. Okay. This is
20 the other typical customer, an all-electric customer
21 that does not use natural gas, and again it is
22 typical, average monthly use. Not everyone is

1 typical, and monthly use will vary. In this case,
2 assuming the Commission approves everything we have
3 asked for, it will be an \$11.33 increase per month.

4 Now, Stan is also in charge of our
5 energy efficiency programs, and we are rolling out
6 some significant electric energy efficiency programs
7 that will help you reduce your bill. And as part of
8 this rate case we are proposing gas energy efficiency
9 programs to help you reduce your bill.

10 I am sure you are wondering why the
11 AmerenIP increase is greater than the other two
12 companies. And it is because the actual IP costs
13 increased more than the other two companies.
14 Remember, I said we are using our actual 2006 costs
15 in this rate case. And what's happened is the
16 current owner of AmerenIP, the Ameren Illinois
17 utilities, is spending more on operations, more on
18 maintenance, more on reliability and more on customer
19 service than the previous owner did. And another big
20 impact was that we conformed the depreciation rates
21 for AmerenIP to that of the other utilities, and that
22 includes that, too.

1 So for the question of why, why is
2 this adjustment necessary, I have talked about
3 recovering our actual costs and again it is based on
4 2006. And please keep in mind that those costs have
5 increased significantly from the 2004 year we used
6 before to the 2006 year we are using now.

7 A rate increase is necessary so we can
8 continue to improve reliability. We have made
9 improvements. It is not perfect. We are not
10 perfect. We have made improvements, though, from '04
11 to '06. We want to continued that for Ameren. We
12 want to continue investments in the electric and gas
13 delivery system, provide better service.

14 Another reason a rate increase is
15 necessary is because we truly do want to lower the
16 cost of borrowing money. Our bonds right now are
17 rated as junk bonds. They are below investment
18 grade. It costs us more money than we like or you
19 would like to borrow money so that we can invest in
20 the electric and gas delivery system. And that's
21 where we get the money it takes to repair the system
22 and build the system. So if we can climb out of the

1 junk bond hole back to investment grade, we can
2 borrow money more cheaply and continue to invest in
3 the system.

4 And, finally, the last bullet is an
5 important one, too. We are asking that our investors
6 earn a fair return on their money. And by that we
7 mean a return that is similar to what other utilities
8 earned. And again, once again tying it back to
9 reliability, investors are going to be unwilling to
10 lend to us over the long term unless we are earning a
11 fair return.

12 So again we need to borrow the money
13 to invest in the system to continue decent
14 reliability and improved reliability. The problem is
15 our present rates are not adequate to do what I
16 described on the slide.

17 A little more background, and I am
18 almost done, folks, and we will move on. Some
19 examples of cost increase. We are spending a lot
20 more money on tree trimming. We are spending a lot
21 more money on reliability projects from the costs in
22 our last rate structure versus what we are asking for

1 now.

2 And then here is some examples of some
3 essential materials that we use to repair our systems
4 or build our systems. Transformers are up 60
5 percent, gas pipe up 45, diesel fuel, wire, cable up
6 30 and poles 10, and this is not insignificant. We
7 buy 1.6 million gallons of diesel fuel per year, and
8 that's up 30 percent. We buy 60,000 wooden poles a
9 year. We lay 250 miles of gas pipe a year. We
10 string 1600 miles of wire a year. That's a lot of
11 investment. And our three-year plan is to invest
12 nearly \$500 million into our electric and gas
13 delivery systems, so significant cost increases.

14 Finally, next slide, there are
15 customer benefits for these rate increases. I will
16 be very brief. We talked about enhanced reliability.
17 Put that in concrete terms, better reliability, that
18 means fewer outages and when we have outages, shorter
19 outages, and that's what we are trying to do. We are
20 trying to improve customer service. We want to
21 continue to make those investments in infrastructure.
22 And keep in mind that we have had an ever-growing

1 increase in electric demand from our customers for
2 decades, and we need to keep up with that.

3 And then the final reason is that if
4 we can restore our bonds back to investment grade, it
5 will lower the cost of interest and it will help
6 lower future rate increases.

7 Next slide, as Stan emphasized, we
8 have customer service co-workers out there, some of
9 our best, that can help with your billing problems,
10 service problems and steer you to rate relief money
11 that is there ready and waiting to be used. So
12 please take advantage of that.

13 As I mentioned earlier, our goal is to
14 provide cost-efficient, safe and reliable service to
15 you. At the same time we try to attempt to achieve a
16 high level of customer satisfaction.

17 And thank you again, Mr. Bensko, for
18 this opportunity.

19 HEARING OFFICER BENSKO: Thank you, Mr. Nelson.

20 At this time I would like to request
21 that your representative, Bob Flider, come forward
22 and say a few words.

1 REPRESENTATIVE FLIDER: Thank you, Mr. Hearing
2 Examiner. Can everybody hear me okay? I'll try and
3 talk loud.

4 I want to thank you for coming
5 tonight, and appreciate the fact that you have come
6 here from Springfield to hear the views of people in
7 our community. Many here feel very strongly that
8 this rate increase request from Ameren should be
9 rejected. And I would like to represent those views
10 to you.

11 I provided some written comments, and
12 in addition to that I have with me 1600 signatures
13 and petitions that I would like to share with you,
14 and we have also got some written testimony that I
15 will share with you later. Those signatures and
16 comments are but a few of the many calls that we have
17 heard from, many people we have heard from,
18 throughout the past several weeks.

19 I am here tonight to relay my views,
20 and at the same time just want to say at the outset
21 that I certainly am not against a power company
22 making a profit. But the profits must be made

1 fairly. Now, Ameren contributed \$150 million to a
2 rate relief package signed into law last year. That
3 came after months of consumer suffering and months of
4 negotiations with legislators, including myself.

5 With that \$150 million rate relief
6 contribution in mind, it should also be noted that
7 Ameren's current rate increase request before the
8 Commission is valued at \$247 million, thereby
9 negating the contribution to the rate relief effort
10 for consumers.

11 I realize that this hearing is not
12 meant to be a reflection of what consumers have dealt
13 with since the rate increase in January 2007. But
14 your decision on Ameren's current request cannot be
15 made in a vacuum or without context.

16 In my travels throughout central
17 Illinois I have met with hundreds of working
18 families, senior citizens, business owners and others
19 negatively impacted by already high electric and
20 natural gas rates. With the economy struggling and
21 citizens slumping to make ends meet more and more
22 each day, the request before the ICC is simply not

1 something that my constituents can afford.

2 I can't tell you the amount of work
3 that went into the rate relief package that was
4 ultimately passed, and I know that many consumers
5 wanted to see more. But as some of us sat at the
6 table during negotiations, I can tell you that the
7 end result was a major accomplishment. That
8 accomplishment, \$1 billion in rate relief passed by
9 the General Assembly, supported by AARP, Citizens
10 Utility Board and the Attorney General, will be for
11 naught if the ICC gives Ameren what they are asking
12 for.

13 With the Company's new rate request,
14 it is the customers of the AmerenIP service territory
15 that will suffer the most. Of the \$247 million
16 increase that Ameren is seeking, nearly 80 percent
17 will come from AmerenIP customers. That's why
18 central Illinoisans need to speak up. It's been
19 estimated that AmerenIP customers can expect to pay
20 \$240 or more per year.

21 One of the more troubling components
22 of Ameren's request is the issue of surcharges. The

1 idea of charging all customers a surcharge to help
2 those who cannot pay their bills is an admission by
3 Ameren that rates are too high. If you have to
4 develop a surcharge on your customers because you
5 know another block of customers will be unable to pay
6 their bills, then something is wrong. This policy
7 will only perpetuate the problem of customers being
8 unable to pay their bills.

9 Another surcharge that Ameren is
10 lobbying for is a surcharge on the delivery of
11 natural gas that is never used by consumers. This is
12 another attempt to squeeze the most that it can out
13 of customers. These surcharges, coupled with the
14 rate increase, would be a harsh blow to my
15 constituents and is something that the ICC has a
16 responsibility to reject.

17 I have no doubt that Ameren's costs
18 are increasing, but that could be said for every
19 person in this room. The cost of living is rising,
20 and so is the impact on my constituents. The
21 difference between local residents and Ameren is that
22 Ameren made profits last year. And I am sure if you

1 ask anyone in this room, they will tell you that they
2 live on strict family budgets and budgets that can
3 not be stretched any further. And most would not be
4 able to say that their household saw any profit.

5 The massive rate hike of 2007 is
6 definitely one cause of that. If the ICC approves
7 Ameren's rate increase as requested, it will cause
8 undue suffering for central Illinois residents. I am
9 asking the ICC to give a lot of thought to the
10 comments here tonight and make a decision that is
11 best for the consumers of central Illinois. For that
12 reason, I am asking the ICC to reject Ameren's rate
13 increase request.

14 I also have with me some excerpts from
15 testimony I would like to share with you that were
16 submitted by many of my constituents. I think you
17 are going to hear a common theme among these
18 comments.

19 This is from Ron and Pat Hodge of
20 Lovington. "At this time Ameren's request for a rate
21 increase would not be appropriate. After the rate
22 increase of a year ago, the situation is worse

1 regarding people on fixed incomes and low income
2 single parents. These people have to make a choice
3 of medicine, feeding their families or paying their
4 high power bills. It is very obvious that a power
5 rate increase is not an option at this time. If
6 Ameren was losing money, this would be a different
7 story."

8 These comments are from William and
9 Lorene Jarrett of Decatur. "We feel something has to
10 stop. The rates are so very high now when you are
11 trying to live on a fixed income. It is hard to pay
12 all the bills. When the power bill continues to
13 increase, how are we supposed to keep up. It is time
14 for a stop in the increases."

15 This is from Pam Laskowski of Mt.
16 Zion. "People can barely survive as things are now.
17 Poor people, i.e. the working poor, and elderly have
18 to keep their thermostats at 62 degrees, wear extra
19 clothing to try and keep warm inside their homes.
20 What a travesty! Some people even have to choose
21 between power, medicine and food. I have experienced
22 these issues as a home care nurse in the past. If

1 anything, rates still need to go down."

2 This is from Betty Woodring, Mt. Zion.
3 "Seniors on fixed incomes can hardly make it
4 financially due to the high cost of utilities,
5 gasoline, insurance, food and medicine. Most of us
6 are nearing the poverty level and will soon be
7 eligible for food stamps and other entitlements. The
8 greed of many of our large corporations are depleting
9 what small resources some of us have worked a
10 lifetime to get. A lot of us have tried to live
11 within our budgets and are being penalized for doing
12 so. We are headed for a total destruction if things
13 don't change. Big government, higher taxes, higher
14 prices will destroy this country, along with over
15 spending by the federal government." Believe me, I
16 am listening to that one, too.

17 This is from Doris Younker of Decatur.
18 "In these hard times, seniors are living on limited
19 income, high grocery bills, gas for our cars way out
20 of sight. Our electric and gas heating bills way out
21 of reach for many. It just doesn't make sense.
22 Ameren rate increases, they have shown a good profit.

1 They do not need to bleed the people. They are
2 making good money without the increase. We the
3 people need Ameren rates lowered, not raised. Thank
4 you. We the people, Ameren's 247 million rate
5 increase, no way, please."

6 So in conclusion we are asking the
7 Illinois Commerce Commission to listen to the people
8 and reject the rate increase.

9 Thank you.

10 HEARING OFFICER BENSKO: Thank you.

11 Okay. Now I would like to ask
12 Representative Bill Mitchell to come forward.

13 REPRESENTATIVE MITCHELL: Good evening. Can
14 everyone hear me all right? This section?

15 I want to thank the Commerce
16 Commission for coming here this evening as well as
17 Ameren and, most importantly, the folks here who came
18 out in this very, very cold weather. I will see you
19 whenever the Peoria hearing is, so I can testify for
20 the people I represent in East Peoria, Pekin and
21 Tazwell County.

22 The issue is a decade after

1 competition was introduced in the utility industry
2 or, excuse me, long distance phone rates have fallen
3 by half, air fares by more than a fourth and trucking
4 rates by a fourth. A decade after the federal
5 government open the business of utilities generating
6 electricity to competition, the market has proved no
7 such decline.

8 As a matter of fact, if you look, and
9 I know the gentlemen, these are Ameren Illinois and I
10 represent all three of your companies in Ameren
11 Illinois, if you go just right across the river to
12 Ameren Missouri, those folks in a regulated state
13 owned by Ameren Missouri are paying about \$.07 a
14 kilowatt hour. You here in Illinois, the last time I
15 checked, were paying a little over \$.10 a kilowatt
16 hour, in regulated versus deregulated.

17 When we talk about what the General
18 Assembly did last year in terms of rate relief, there
19 were no rate relief. Your rates are staying the
20 same. You got a rebate somewhat. It was front
21 loaded for this year and next year and then the year
22 after. It was a three-year program. It is going to

1 diminish. Rates remain the same.

2 Deregulation hasn't worked, and it is
3 costing you, the consumer. Ameren's request for 247
4 million in electric and gas rate increases is neither
5 reasonable nor fair to its consumers. When the
6 electric rate caps ended last year, many Ameren
7 customers saw their electric bills double or triple.
8 In response, the General Assembly passed legislation
9 to provide \$1 billion in electric rate relief.
10 However, this relief was too little and too late. It
11 is outrageous for Ameren to be requesting another
12 increase after we just spent months working to
13 provide some measure of relief for these skyrocketing
14 rates.

15 I believe the evidence clearly shows
16 that deregulation has not succeeded in Illinois or
17 for that matter the rest of the country. There is no
18 competition for residential customers, and the
19 utilities still enjoy a monopoly status. I intend to
20 move forward with legislation to re-regulate Illinois
21 electric utilities this year in order to provide
22 long-term price stability for Illinois consumers.

1 I again want to thank everyone for
2 coming. I look forward to working with you as this
3 legislative session progresses to really reform the
4 system and make competition work.

5 Thank you.

6 HEARING OFFICER BENSKO: Thank you,
7 Representative.

8 We are going to start calling on the
9 public. I will use the sheets that you signed up.
10 Please step up to the microphone. You are going to
11 have to speak right into it. State your name and
12 spell it so that the court reporter has an accurate
13 record.

14 The first person is Dean Clough,
15 C-L-O-U-G-H, I believe.

16 MR. CLOUGH: Close enough. Here is a copy,
17 maybe make life a little easier for you and the lady.
18 And anyone else? I don't know if you want a copy.

19 My name is Dean Clough, C-L-O-U-G-H,
20 and, yes, that's who I am. I have been a customer of
21 CILCO and AmerenCILCO since 1975. And I would like
22 to make a concern that any rate restructuring that

1 the Commerce Commission do, that you include a
2 Time-of-Use rate mechanism similar to one that CILCO
3 used to have.

4 Up until last -- the end of 2006,
5 CILCO had a Time-of-Use rate mechanism that was
6 discontinued. I live in an all-electric house. So I
7 would like to make sure that this rate, large rate,
8 it was called "Rate 2 Large Residential Time-of-Use
9 Electrical Service" by AmerenCILCO prior to 2007, be
10 adopted or be included in any rate adjustment change
11 that you may make.

12 And I am not talking about the
13 residential real time pricing that Ameren is
14 proposing. That, that's too expensive.

15 And I show attached on here a graph of
16 what my electric bills did last year. My electric
17 usage by cutting the thermostat back, different light
18 bulbs and stuff, I was able to reduce my usage by 8.7
19 percent. But in spite of that, for the whole year my
20 cost went up 24.7 percent. And that didn't seem
21 right. I am trying to figure out why that happened.

22 Well, there is two reasons for that.

1 One, the rates went up. But, two, much of this, I
2 believe, was the discontinuance of the Time-of-Use
3 rate that CILCO used to provide, CILCO and
4 AmerenCILCO used to provide. So I would like to see
5 the Commerce Commission incorporate that back into
6 the CILCO Ameren program rates.

7 I believe, let's see, in case you are
8 not familiar with this, I will give you a brief
9 outline what this Time-of-Use rate was from ten
10 o'clock at night until seven o'clock the next
11 morning. You had a much lower rate, almost half the
12 rate of what the daytime usage was. What we did, my
13 wife and I did, was, one, we put a timer on our hot
14 water heater to cut down on the -- and it shut the
15 hot water heater off at seven o'clock in the morning
16 and it turned it back on at ten o'clock at night.
17 And that worked out great because you took baths in
18 the morning during the low rates and at night it
19 reheated itself.

20 Also, on weekends, the discounted rate
21 was also on weekends from ten o'clock at night until
22 seven a.m. and on weekends. And that helped us. We

1 did most of our laundry and most of our baking or
2 anything, the high electrical use things, on the
3 weekends. And this reduced our electric bill. And
4 so this helped us reduced our bill, and then I think
5 that's part of the reason why our rates went up so
6 much.

7 And I think not only did it help us
8 with our costs, it helped CILCO or AmerenCILCO. I
9 use them interchangeably. Because it reduced that
10 peak demand that you had to meet. If we heated that
11 water at ten o'clock in the morning when you have
12 higher demand or in the middle of the afternoon when
13 the hot water heater or the dryer kicked in in the
14 middle of the afternoon, that was when you were
15 having to pay really high rates for peak demand. So
16 I would like to see that any Time-of-Use structure
17 that AmerenCILCO provided before be incorporated in
18 this new rate structure.

19 And one of the problems is that, well,
20 how is this going to affect Ameren financially.
21 Well, I have got another graph here I would like to
22 submit to you, sir, that when this -- when this plan

1 was in effect, back in 2000, the year 2000, Ameren's
2 stock, the holding company -- it is hard to
3 differentiate between Ameren Illinois, Ameren
4 Missouri -- anyway, the stock was in the low \$30 a
5 share. Seven years later when they discontinued this
6 rate their stock was in the low 50s. So it really
7 didn't hurt the Company. I am not a financial
8 expert. All I know is what the Wall Street people
9 tell me your company is worth. And the year 2000 you
10 went from the low 30s to the low 50s with this rate
11 structure. So I think incorporating this rate
12 structure of Time-of-Use will not financially harm
13 Ameren. I think you can do it.

14 And then I have a couple other
15 comments. I read two more things. The gentleman
16 talked here that Ameren would like to get a fair rate
17 of return. But he didn't say what that fair rate of
18 return is. Mr. Rainwater said that you wanted a ten
19 percent rate of return.

20 And also one other question I have for
21 you is that I read that, well, some of the people can
22 remember what happened to the Illinois Power rates

1 when they built the Clinton Power Plant. I read here
2 in your annual report you are talking about building
3 a nuclear plant. Are you going to build that plant
4 in Illinois? Is there anything we can do to prevent
5 those costs from being run into us? That's my
6 concern with this rate structuring. Are we going to
7 have to pay for another nuclear plant?

8 Anyway, that's my comments. My main
9 concern is I would like to see those Time-of-Use
10 rates incorporated in any future rate plan.

11 Thank you for hearing me.

12 HEARING OFFICER BENSKO: Thank you. And do you
13 have something that you were going to give me?

14 MR. CLOUGH: Yes.

15 HEARING OFFICER BENSKO: I have got to remind
16 everybody, you can ask a rhetorical question, but the
17 question and answer period is later, of course, and
18 we will get those.

19 MR. CLOUGH: Here is the copy of the --

20 HEARING OFFICER BENSKO: Okay, thank you.

21 Thank you, I appreciate it.

22 Peg Keeley.

1 MS. KEELEY: Sir, can I speak from here?

2 HEARING OFFICER BENSKO: Sure, you can. You
3 can just sit down in your chair.

4 MS. KEELEY: Good evening, representatives of
5 the Illinois Commerce Commission and residents of
6 Illinois.

7 HEARING OFFICER BENSKO: Ma'am, could you --

8 MS. KEELEY: I am Peg Keeley, K-E-E-L-E-Y.

9 Thank you for the opportunity to speak
10 on this cold February night. The recent below record
11 temperatures we have been experiencing in central
12 Illinois this past week makes the topic of this
13 hearing very timely and of paramount importance to
14 the people of Decatur, many of whom are AARP members.
15 I am a representative of AARP and its 1.8 million
16 members in Illinois.

17 AARP is alarmed by the continued
18 efforts of the Illinois utilities, ComEd and Ameren,
19 to increase energy prices. Last year AARP worked
20 with the Attorney General and the Citizens Utility
21 Board and the Illinois General Assembly to overturn
22 the electric rate auction and end the skyrocketing

1 increases it created. As a result, one billion was
2 provided by Ameren and ComEd for rate relief, and a
3 new electricity procurement process was implemented.
4 AARP members across the state fought hard for that
5 victory. Now these increases will move to eliminate
6 it.

7 Ameren seems to be at it again,
8 requesting nearly a quarter of a billion dollars
9 increase in its annual delivery charge for both
10 electricity and natural gas customers. To make
11 matters worse, Ameren proposes to collect some of
12 these new charges through the use of so-called riders
13 or surcharges.

14 One of Ameren's proposed riders is for
15 so-called uncollectibles. Under this rider all
16 customers would pay a surcharge to cover the
17 shortfall created by those customers who are unable
18 to afford their higher utility bills in the first
19 place. In addition, they also want a rider for
20 natural gas customers. That would charge customers
21 for the delivery of gas they never received. They
22 call this decoupling. We call it wrong.

1 Riders create a fast track for Ameren
2 rate increases without the benefit of looking at the
3 company's overall revenue to see if there are off
4 setting increases. They unfairly shift the risk on
5 the customers by allowing these unfair increases
6 outside of a rate case audit.

7 Illinois consumers deserve better.
8 Regulation has already exacted a high toll on the
9 customers. By creating a fast track to higher rates
10 through riders, Ameren is proposing to go down the
11 failed deregulation path once again. The Commission
12 must protect the consumers by rejecting riders and
13 Ameren's larger attempt to syphon off much of the
14 hard won fight and won one billion out of customers'
15 pockets.

16 The simple truth is that working
17 people, family and retirees and small business owners
18 cannot afford to pay these ever skyrocketing energy
19 bills. On average families spend a greater share of
20 their income on utility costs than on any other
21 necessity. For older adults their share of utility
22 services can be as high as 24 percent of their

1 monthly income. This means many will be forced to
2 choose between paying their electric bill, rent and
3 buying food or prescription drugs. We all know that
4 this increase will not just be on residential
5 customers. They will pay the increase over and over
6 again as costs go up on all small businesses and
7 services providers.

8 AARP urges the Illinois Commerce
9 Commission to do the right thing, reject Ameren's
10 request. Further, AARP urges the Commission to
11 reject riders which amount to nothing more than
12 slipping in undue, unfair increases for consumers.
13 The approval of Ameren's delivery service increase
14 and these riders will put the health, safety and
15 financial security of residential customers at risk.

16 Thank you.

17 HEARING OFFICER BENSKO: Thank you, ma'am.
18 Thank you for the copy, too.

19 Bernie Hart.

20 MS. HART: Hello, my name is Bernie Hart,
21 B-E-R-N-I-E, H-A-R-T.

22 I am sorry it is such a cold night

1 tonight because I feel like if it had been a warmer
2 night, this room would not have been near large
3 enough. Because I know of different people who did
4 not come because of the cold weather; their bodies
5 will not take it any more.

6 I am talking for myself. I retired in
7 1985 because of medical disability. As the years
8 have gone by, when I retired I had a fair amount of
9 income that I could move around a little bit if I
10 wanted to. At this point I live with my sister and
11 her husband, and still we, you know, are just barely
12 cutting it. If this rate increase goes in, it is
13 just one more thing that digs in our pocket.

14 I thought with Social Security, I
15 would go out there with a three percent cost of
16 living. Medicare and my insurance that covers what
17 they don't, I am still \$20 in the hole before you
18 count in what gas has gone up, what our other bills
19 like groceries and so forth. And I am not the only
20 one. There is a lot of other senior citizens. I am
21 out and about. I meet other people. I hear their
22 stories, too. And many of them are very much like

1 mine.

2 And I thank you so much for hearing
3 us. Thank you.

4 HEARING OFFICER BENSKO: Thank you for
5 commenting.

6 And, folks, earlier in the
7 presentations Ameren told you about some of the
8 programs they have to help. And Stan Ogden -- Stan,
9 stand up for a second, please. If you need some help
10 with your bills and stuff like that, I want you to go
11 and talk to Stan tonight and see if there is anything
12 that Ameren might have in their arsenal to help you.
13 So I say that at the beginning.

14 Thank you very much, Bernie, for
15 speaking tonight.

16 Charles Jacobs.

17 MR. JACOBS: My name is Charles Jacobs,
18 J-A-C-O-B-S. And I am from Moweaqua, Illinois.

19 The major concern that is being voiced
20 here has to do with how are the elderly going to meet
21 these additional costs. Back when the first rate
22 hike came in, the choice had to be made between

1 housing and pharmacy, and now we are including in
2 that how to stay warm or cool in the summer. It is
3 very difficult choices. I am a pastor there and do
4 meet on a very friendly basis, that the people can
5 express themselves without fear of being
6 misunderstood.

7 This second rate hike proposed is
8 simply unattainable for people on limited income.
9 And it would help if we had actual facts of why it is
10 necessary. We have heard that there is a reason for
11 increasing the rates to get what was -- these things
12 are unattainable -- in order to increase the rates to
13 recover actual costs; secondly, to become more
14 reliable; third, to lower costs of borrowing and;
15 fourth, to earn a fair return for Ameren, for the
16 Company. These are the reasons that we have been
17 given for the increase. That and a cup of coffee --
18 that and 85 cents, a dollar and a half, gets you a
19 cup of coffee anywhere. There are no facts there.

20 We are hanging out in the dark. We
21 are freezing to death, worried to death, have little
22 direction, absolutely no hope is offered, and we get

1 all sorts of -- and I am not trying to be angry, but
2 this is just actual -- there is nothing to hang onto.
3 I need something to put my hat on, if there is an
4 actual increase and just not promises about some pie
5 in the sky type of thing. Perhaps checks and
6 balances somewhere is a system to discover why Ameren
7 needs the increase, some sort of checks and balances
8 that give bottom line figures that are observable,
9 factual and can be reproduced.

10 Two people making less than \$55,000 a
11 year can get assistance, I am told. There shouldn't
12 be any reason for people, two people, making \$55,000
13 a year to need assistance if all costs were fair. We
14 need fair costs and an accounting of those fair
15 costs.

16 That is an opinion from Moweaqua,
17 Illinois. Thank you for coming, Commission. Thank
18 you for coming and thank you for hearing me.

19 HEARING OFFICER BENSKO: Thank you very much
20 for speaking tonight.

21 Mike Childs. Folks, if I butcher your
22 name tonight, I am not doing it on purpose.

1 MR. CHILDS: My name is Mike Childs,

2 C-H-I-L-D-S.

3 I came tonight because I retired and I
4 just get tired of getting told all this stuff here,
5 stuff here, stuff here for the power company. I
6 retired. I put everything energy efficient in my
7 house. From the refrigerator, air conditioning, new
8 furnace, everything I have in my house is energy
9 efficient. My gas and light bill is higher now than
10 I can afford. And I am retired and I am assuming
11 there is other people out there like my that can't
12 afford to pay their bills either.

13 They say we have got assistance to
14 help you. Here, if I had 55,000 coming in, I don't
15 think I am going to need any help. I can budget and
16 pay my bills. I am sure there are some people out
17 here that couldn't, but some people I know can't even
18 afford to pay their light bill or am I going to take
19 my medicine this month, and I think that is terrible.
20 I don't know where it is going to end.

21 I have seen neighbors that work for
22 Ameren, here. They don't live here by me any more.

1 I live in Mt. Zion. They live in Missouri. There
2 are several of them. I think I have got several
3 neighbors that have been bought off, okay. In other
4 words, we spent the money to buy them off to get rid
5 of them, okay.

6 Now, here, they talk about their great
7 service. I think I can tell you how great their
8 service is. I call down here to customer service; I
9 don't know if I am going to get Decatur, Illinois, or
10 if I am going to get North Carolina which I have been
11 dealing with here in the last two months. This is
12 how great their service is. You get North Carolina;
13 they don't even know what they are doing here in
14 Decatur. And this is a concern to me, that they
15 stand up here and say I need a rate increase.

16 And, here, I have been following the
17 decoupling. Now they want me to pay for natural gas,
18 which I am paying higher natural gas than I can
19 afford, for a service that they are not even going to
20 provide me. I am going to pay for gas that I am not
21 using. So I feel this is unjust.

22 And, here, Ameren, whenever they

1 bought out Illinois Power from the very outfit in
2 Texas, they knew that they were junk bond status.
3 Don't stand up here and tell me they are junk bond
4 status when everybody has seen what they are paying
5 their executives in Missouri.

6 That's all I am saying.

7 HEARING OFFICER BENSKO: Thank you. Mike, if
8 you do have a billing or service problem, Randy over
9 here, his department does consumer complaints from
10 the ICC and then Ameren does have people sitting
11 right outside this room that can help you with those
12 billing and service problems, too.

13 AUDIENCE MEMBER: How do you reach them?

14 HEARING OFFICER BENSKO: He is standing right
15 next to you.

16 MR. CHILDS: Okay. I had a problem on my bill
17 for two months. I would either get North Carolina or
18 I would get Decatur. Decatur would say one thing;
19 then I would get North Carolina. They don't even
20 know what's going on in Decatur, North Carolina
21 don't. So I had a cost set out, I am paying nothing
22 in North Carolina, people in Decatur I am paying a

1 little bit of money, and these people don't even know
2 what they are doing, how am I going to settle my
3 bill.

4 That's all I have to say.

5 HEARING OFFICER BENSKO: Okay. What I want you
6 to do is I want you to talk to Randy or talk to them.
7 I know who you are and I want them -- I am
8 instructing them that they have to get back to me
9 within 48 hours and tell me how they handled your
10 complaint, okay.

11 MR. CHILDS: I don't feel like they deserve
12 anything.

13 HEARING OFFICER BENSKO: Okay, thank you.

14 Ron Runyen.

15 MR. RUNYEN: My name is Ron Runyen. Last name
16 is R-U-N-Y-E-N. I live in Maroa. I have been on the
17 city council down there. I deliver meals to the
18 senior citizens down there.

19 For one thing, I don't believe the
20 problem with the rates is the real problem. The
21 problem is we haven't found a one of those people or
22 anyone that at any time IP has told the truth. Every

1 time they come forward and start telling us
2 something, they are feeding us with this, you know,
3 you know what happens to it, it ends up on the ground
4 behind you.

5 What it amounted to with me just
6 recently on a bill, I got an estimated bill. Well,
7 we just got done putting in these electronic readers.
8 That wasn't going to happen no more. Guess what? It
9 happened. Over and over again. Now they are saying
10 believe what they are saying, they need this money,
11 believe what they are saying, they are going to tell
12 the truth. We haven't managed to get the truth out
13 of them yet. We haven't managed to get the truth out
14 of them in probably 15 years. So what makes anybody
15 think they are telling the truth now? I can't
16 believe a word they say.

17 All I see is the next step for a lot
18 of these older folks. They have already cut their
19 heat. They are wearing sweaters and dungarees and
20 got two blankets wrapped around them, barely keeping
21 their water from freezing in their house. What's the
22 next step? Maybe some of these poles that these guys

1 are taking out, they can bring and let these people
2 burn for heat, but I don't think they can eat them.
3 I think they are going to have trouble with their
4 food. Well, I know they are. I know there are
5 already some of them that are having trouble eating
6 in a small town like ours.

7 I live on a fixed income, and I am a
8 little different than the guy or the gal on Social
9 Security. I have got no -- my fixed income comes
10 from an early retirement, but I had no choice. The
11 company left us, this area. As a matter of fact, it
12 left the nation. So, you know, I can't go in here
13 and say, hey, give me a raise because I deserve it.
14 Well, I haven't heard anything to prove anybody
15 deserved anything and, I am sorry, I don't believe a
16 word they say and never will.

17 HEARING OFFICER BENSKO: Thank you, Ron. Ron,
18 did you get your problem solved with the billing?

19 MR. RUNYEN: Yeah, the young lady told me that
20 they couldn't get to my meter. The meter was wide
21 open. The snow is about that deep (indicating).
22 There was absolutely no reason whatsoever -- she told

1 me it was in a locked area. That was the code that
2 was on there. I don't have a locked area. It is
3 outside. I don't have a fence. I don't have
4 anything. I watched the gal that done the reading,
5 watched her go to one of the houses across from me.
6 That's when I went out and read my own. And the
7 meter reading that they had on there sure didn't
8 match up with the meter reading that they estimated.

9 Now, the estimation like that, you
10 brought it up, the estimation like that, let's say
11 they only charged me \$10 too much, \$10 for 480,000,
12 was it? Wow, that's pretty good money to in the
13 bank.

14 HEARING OFFICER BENSKO: Thank you, Ron.

15 What I want to make sure tonight is
16 that if there is a billing or service problem, that
17 we get it taken care of. And I am directing the
18 Company, if somebody has a billing or service
19 problem, that they are to get back to me within 48
20 hours and tell me how, you know, what happened with
21 that complaint tonight or you can talk to Randy, and
22 Randy's group does a wonderful job. They work with

1 the companies and they try to get these things
2 resolved. He has a wonderful, wonderful group that
3 works for him.

4 Gary Mathias.

5 MR. MATHIAS: That's close. My name is Gary
6 Mathias and I am from Macon. My last name is
7 M-A-T-H-I-A-S.

8 I appreciate the Commerce Commission
9 coming over and holding this hearing. I know a lot
10 of people that didn't come tonight. And the reason
11 they didn't come is they have lost confidence. They
12 don't think it will make any difference. I do think
13 it will make a difference, and that's the reason I
14 came.

15 As I understand the increase, the
16 existing -- this is on the delivery portion of the
17 bill -- it is two cents a kilowatt hour now. They
18 want an additional two cents a kilowatt hour, is that
19 correct?

20 HEARING OFFICER BENSKO: Well --

21 MR. MATHIAS: Well, it is hard to speak about
22 something if, you know, you are going to have the

1 questions and answers afterwards.

2 HEARING OFFICER BENSKO: Right.

3 MR. MATHIAS: But it seems to me if that is
4 correct, that's a hundred percent increase. You
5 know, they have cited the poles.

6 HEARING OFFICER BENSKO: Wait one second.

7 MR. BEYER: We will let the company answer that
8 in question and answer.

9 HEARING OFFICER BENSKO: Yes.

10 MR. MATHIAS: They have cited the poles are up
11 60 percent. Diesel fuel is up 30 percent. But
12 that's not a hundred percent increase. But I feel
13 like it is really the Commerce Commission's duty to
14 the people to stand up for them and to show them that
15 the government does care and there is somebody that's
16 going to -- I think the only reason they are asking
17 for this increase is because they can. You know, I
18 think that's what happened the last time. They asked
19 for the increase and they got every bit of it. They
20 probably didn't expect to get every bit of it, but
21 they did.

22 To turn around and ask for a hundred

1 percent increase again, I think, is just outrageous.

2 HEARING OFFICER BENSKO: Thank you, Gary.

3 Doug Hays.

4 MR. HAYS: Howdy. Can you hear me?

5 HEARING OFFICER BENSKO: Yes.

6 MR. HAYS: I am from Maroa, a small town, and I
7 don't have anything prepared. I have never been to
8 something like this before.

9 HEARING OFFICER BENSKO: Just spell your name.

10 MR. HAYS: H-A-Y-S.

11 HEARING OFFICER BENSKO: Thank you.

12 MR. HAYS: And never -- you know, a lot of
13 emotion here tonight. I am not on a fixed income.
14 But I kind of want to put things in perspective just
15 so I understand it.

16 I built a house; it's been about nine
17 years ago. There were three homes in the
18 neighborhood. And the average budget bill was about
19 170 bucks. And I had two teenagers who leave every
20 light on, every TV on, has to have it 74 degrees when
21 dad is not around. And over the past eight years the
22 teenagers have moved on and the house is pretty

1 empty. We don't let the dog out four and five times
2 a day. She is not around any more. And the budget
3 bill has gone up from \$175 to about 220. But my
4 usage has dropped.

5 Now, I don't -- I personally don't
6 have a problem paying it, but I am trying to figure
7 out, okay, this same neighborhood now has about, I
8 don't know, where it had three houses, now it's got
9 15. The money going into Illinois Power, Ameren, has
10 gone up roughly 500 percent from one little
11 neighborhood. Now, the gas lines were there. The
12 power lines were there, and they charge you to tap
13 into it.

14 So I guess my question is if a
15 business owner here in this room tonight had a
16 business -- that's a rhetorical question, that way I
17 am not imposing on this Q and A thing -- how many
18 business owners wouldn't want a business that has a
19 product that goes into every house, every
20 municipality, every school, every business. I work
21 for Cat. They are going three shifts out there so
22 they are burning power. And then you turn around and

1 you have to explain to your neighbor that I have got
2 my product going into everywhere and I am not making
3 any money. Now, to me, my neighbor would say, dude,
4 you are mismanaging this, okay.

5 I am not against Ameren making, you
6 know, a living. Heck, I mean, everybody has got to
7 do that. But I guess some of the questions are, when
8 you have growth as we have in Mt. Zion, a little bit
9 in Maroa, not a lot, but there is over -- for the
10 investment that they made however many years ago to
11 provide the power at that point, they are getting a
12 lot of income generated from it.

13 And so I guess I just wanted to try to
14 put a couple things in perspective. Hopefully, I am
15 kind of understanding what's going on here. And I
16 apologize for not having anything else prepared. But
17 I appreciate the effort you guys do, you know, that
18 you put out to provide this. Because it is almost
19 like if it wasn't for like the Illinois Commerce
20 Commission and the Citizens Utility Board, where
21 would it end?

22 So that's all I have to say. Thank

1 you.

2 HEARING OFFICER BENSKO: Thank you, Doug, and
3 you did a wonderful job.

4 Stan Hall.

5 MR. HALL: I am sort of a low voice so you may
6 have to yell at me to speak up.

7 HEARING OFFICER BENSKO: You are doing great.

8 MR. HALL: My name is Stan Hall, spelled
9 H-A-L-L, and the first thing I am going to do is
10 complain about the Commission. I think their
11 positions to be assigned by a different way than what
12 it is now, by the governor of Illinois.

13 I had one question when I first come
14 in here tonight, but now I have a lot of them. I am
15 not going to ask them all, but I have a lot of them.

16 Does Ameren -- I am talking about the
17 top chiefs, not the working people, the top chiefs --
18 do they ever go out to the area where these poor
19 people are, the senior citizens or whatever they
20 might be, do they ever go out and see how their
21 customers are doing? Do they really care? I don't
22 expect an answer to that. I just want you to think

1 about it.

2 Years ago when they went from Illinois
3 Power to Ameren, I associated with a lot of different
4 Illinois Power people. Now, most of them don't work
5 for Ameren, but their comment was -- and don't hit
6 me -- their comment was, "I can't understand how
7 Ameren is taking all of these businesses because they
8 do not know how to run a power business." I don't
9 know whether anybody else has heard that or not, but
10 I do and sometimes I wonder.

11 But I want to make one other
12 statement. Channel 3 came out to our house today and
13 we were interviewed. Now, I don't know whether that
14 will ever make air or not, but if it does, I wish
15 every one of you could hear what me and my wife had
16 to say. Our country, and I don't mean to make a big
17 speech here, but our country today is in bad shape.
18 And it keeps going down and down and down. And
19 everybody has to agree with me, I mean, unless you
20 are right in the top ten.

21 But just like Ameren, and now I am
22 speaking about this fellow up at the top, if he had

1 spent just half of his salary, he could pay an awful
2 lot of the poor people's bills for them, power bills.
3 Now, I am not saying they are not worth it. But most
4 of these people here that's on Social Security got a
5 2.3 raise on their Social Security. The top man made
6 more than 2.3. But even if he hadn't made 2.3, think
7 of the difference. We are down here and he still
8 goes up and up.

9 I realize that we have to, you know,
10 work to get this taken care of, but I also think
11 there is a lot more problem than just Ameren. And I
12 think we all need to get together and talk about it.
13 Somebody mentioned awhile ago in the place in Maroa
14 wasn't bad and that's true, but so many people will
15 not come out and talk. They say, no, it won't make
16 any difference anyway. They are going to do it that
17 way anyhow. They wouldn't do it that way if
18 everybody went out.

19 Anyway, I am sorry, thanks a lot.

20 HEARING OFFICER BENSKO: Stan, that's
21 wonderful. I appreciate what you are saying.

22 I want to clear something up, folks,

1 about why we are having these, you know, now. It's
2 because of where the case is before the Illinois
3 Commerce Commission. And if we had held these at a
4 later date, your comments, they wouldn't have
5 mattered. If we want them, you know, to be part of
6 the record and if the Chairman or Commissioners or
7 Intervenors, somebody like that, wants to pick up on
8 what the people in this room have said, then we had
9 to do them now.

10 I would much rather not be out on a
11 cold night, the same as all of you, and I truly
12 understand, you know, being too cold for some people
13 to come out. But I just wanted you to know that's
14 the reason why we had to do it now, as opposed to a
15 little bit later. And, Stan, you did a great job.
16 Thank you.

17 Betty Conover.

18 MS. CONOVER: I didn't want to talk tonight.
19 My name is Betty Conover, C-O-N-O-V-E-R.

20 And I didn't sign your list until I
21 came in here and I looked at this blue sheet and I
22 saw SMP Rider, Uncollectibles Rider and Decoupling

1 Rider. And I think of all the times that I don't sit
2 in front of my fireplace and turn on the gas logs
3 because of trying to cut down on my bill.

4 Well, Social Security cut us a little
5 short this year. We got under three percent, but
6 inflation is six percent. Our Medicare supplement
7 took a big leap because they said Medicare isn't
8 paying for a lot of tests, and they are going to take
9 over for that. And then I look at Ameren and they
10 have got a very big increase, and I was really
11 shocked when I found out that they are coming back
12 for more. I don't think they deserve it. And I hope
13 they don't get it.

14 Thank you.

15 HEARING OFFICER BENSKO: Thank you, Betty.
16 Betty, I am glad I talked you into staying tonight.

17 Gabriele Fyke, is that correct?

18 MS. FYKE: That is correct, but I am actually
19 April Fyke. I am her daughter-in-law, and it is
20 F-Y-K-E.

21 HEARING OFFICER BENSKO: Your first name again?

22 MS. FYKE: April.

1 But I actually have noticed that there
2 is a whole group of people missing from here, and
3 that's my age group. I understand that Social
4 Security, you know, it is a fixed income. But at the
5 same time the people in my generation are starting
6 out; they have child care, they have the bottom of
7 the ladder that they are starting on. They are
8 climbing up from making minimum wage. We have bills,
9 too. We need to be represented also.

10 There is -- I also have a couple of
11 different standpoints that I am from. We have some
12 small businesses in our family. And I manage a home
13 community. From that point of view I see the people
14 who are starting out with four or five kids who are
15 making minimum wage who are both trying to work,
16 trying to make the child care. But at the same time
17 I see that, okay, yeah, they make less than \$55,000 a
18 year, and that's fine. But some of them also still
19 have pride. They don't want to go ask for
20 assistance. They want to be able to say, "I did it
21 on my own."

22 And then you have the senior citizens

1 who are trying to make it on their budgets that they
2 have to -- there is nowhere else that it is going to
3 come from. We have to make do with what we have.

4 And, yes, I see that it is a good
5 thing that you guys want to improve your customer
6 service and that you want to improve those things.
7 But at the same time how is your customer service
8 going to help those people when they don't have a
9 phone or when they don't have a car to get to you to
10 take care of their problems.

11 And it is wonderful that these people
12 are jumping up to help these people today who have a
13 problem who got here. But they are not going to go
14 door to door. They are not going to be able to go
15 out and say, oh, I noticed that this month you guys
16 weren't able to pay your bill and we disconnected it,
17 and you don't have a car because licensing has gone
18 up, taxes have gone up, fuel has gone up, sorry, you
19 know, I just couldn't get to everyone.

20 And I see those things, and from the
21 business standpoint I also see that, yeah, you want
22 to make money. That's a good thing. Everybody wants

1 to make money, you know. But ten percent, I mean,
2 when everything is going up, ten percent is a lot to
3 ask of people. And I think that you need to keep in
4 mind that -- I don't agree with rate increases. I
5 understand that they happen. Cost of fuel has gone
6 up. Cost of milk has gone up. But these are just
7 things that you have to keep in mind, that they have
8 gone up for everyone.

9 As a business owner when my property
10 taxes went up, I didn't go out and try to knock on
11 everybody's door and say, "My cost of doing business
12 went up so, you know, I am going to raise everybody's
13 so that I am still making as much of a profit." Yes,
14 cost of business did have to go up, but at the same
15 time I had to eat some of it, too. And I hope that
16 you will keep in mind that there is more than just
17 senior citizens being affected, and I don't want to
18 belittle the fact that they are being affected, but
19 it is a whole another generation being affected also.

20 And I hope that if you guys do get
21 your increases, which that is neither here nor there,
22 that's going to happen or it is not going to happen,

1 I hope it doesn't. Or if it does, I hope it is not
2 as much as you are asking for. But I hope that you
3 keep in mind that not everybody is going to ask for
4 the assistance that you are offering just because
5 some people want to be able to say, "I did it on my
6 own." And maybe you guys could ask for a little bit
7 less in the interest of those people that are trying
8 to make it on their own.

9 And I think that's pretty much all I
10 have to say.

11 HEARING OFFICER BENSKO: Thank you very much.

12 MS. FYKE: Thank you.

13 HEARING OFFICER BENSKO: Debra Sansom.

14 MS. SANSOM: My name is Debra Sansom,
15 D-E-B-R-A, and the last name is spelled S-A-N as in
16 Nancy, S-O-M as in Mary.

17 And I want to let you know that I
18 think this started in April or May of last year, but
19 I was really upset when I found out my bill had
20 increased. It was first at \$103. Then in June it
21 went to 112 or \$120. And I was really outraged. I
22 looked at one of my bills and found out they were

1 going to raise my bill a few dollars more.

2 Well, I am upset still because, well,
3 first of all, I lost my full time job at ADM
4 Hydroponics in January of last year. Well, not just
5 me, the whole work force. And they shut down
6 Hydroponics because they didn't think it was
7 profitable enough. And here I am a year later still
8 looking for a decent full time job.

9 I am still -- I am employed again, but
10 it is only part time and it is not getting me
11 anywhere. I work for Aeromark part time as a school
12 cafeteria assistance worker. And it is not just
13 current hard working people or retirees or business
14 owners that's affected. It is affecting people who
15 have lost their jobs in the last year or so. And
16 that's why I finally decided to take a plunge and
17 join CUB and made a contribution to them.

18 I have had a couple of gals tell me
19 that -- well, I live at Spring Creek Towers and one
20 of the gals there told me that her daughter had told
21 her that she and her husband had gotten into a mess
22 with this budget billing stuff. And, well, I kind of

1 held on to budget billing a few more months
2 thereafter. Well, and now, well, I have talked to my
3 sister who lives three to four hours away up in
4 Crystal Lake and, well, we got to talking one time
5 and she told me, well, she told me the same thing
6 that my neighbor at Spring Creek had told me, that
7 budget billing doesn't really do anything. So I have
8 to really thank my sister for helping me to get off
9 budget billing. And I really kind of wish I did it
10 months ago, earlier, well, in this past year.

11 Let's see, there is something else,
12 too.

13 HEARING OFFICER BENSKO: Take your time.

14 MS. SANSOM: Well, you know, it's awful hard to
15 save for -- put aside money for things that you want
16 to do, you know, like go on vacations, take short
17 pleasure trips. And I couldn't even go to the
18 Illinois State Fair because of the high rate
19 increases. And this past summer every time I have
20 gone to try for LIHEAP, well, they have told me that,
21 well, that I had to be like, let's see, 65 or older
22 or a parent of a child three or under or I had to be

1 severely disabled. Well, I am on a really fixed
2 income, too. Everybody at Spring Creek is. And I am
3 trying the best I could.

4 Well, I don't mean to be stuttering or
5 anything like that.

6 HEARING OFFICER BENSKO: Don't worry about it.

7 MS. SANSOM: Well, I kept wondering to myself,
8 well, all these requirements, I keep thinking to
9 myself, well, what does any of that have to do with
10 electricity. I am like, well, darn it, I need help,
11 too. They are not the only ones struggling. I am,
12 too.

13 This rate increase they are now
14 turning around and asking us for, it's almost like an
15 equivalent version of obesity in my opinion. I
16 just -- well, my bills had gotten lower, but I still
17 want to voice my opinion tonight.

18 HEARING OFFICER BENSKO: And we appreciate it.

19 MS. SANSOM: And so if I get my next bill, and
20 I haven't gotten it yet, I just hope it isn't any 120
21 because -- and I have started using a couple of those
22 fluorescent light bulbs. I have heard something on

1 TV recently about how they are going to, you know,
2 discontinue the regular standard bulbs that we have
3 known for many years and how we are going to --
4 everyone is going to be required to use the
5 fluorescent bulbs. And I am praying that hopefully
6 it does do the trick; it lowers my bills.

7 So, yes, I agree with most of the
8 previous speakers in here. It is outrageous. I
9 mean, do we really need the increases on top of
10 gasoline and all? I mean, really. It is outrageous.
11 I mean, it is hard to make -- we should not -- no one
12 should be penalized for trying to make ends meet, I
13 mean, being on the right track in life and all.

14 I mean, it is just heartbreaking that,
15 you know, we fought so hard for this victory and now
16 it is almost like Ameren is saying, well, there is no
17 one else around here in Decatur to support you, so
18 now you are dealing with us now. I just --

19 HEARING OFFICER BENSKO: I understand.

20 MS. SANSOM: I just wish there was other light
21 and gas companies, reasonable ones to support us. I
22 mean, they don't -- Ameren -- everyone at Ameren

1 doesn't need to -- no one at Ameren needs to be
2 greedy. They are making good incomes and all. And I
3 have talked with someone recently, and she told me
4 that Ameren was laying off some workers. I am not
5 sure if that's true or not. But if it is true, then
6 I think I know why.

7 HEARING OFFICER BENSKO: Okay.

8 MS. SANSOM: Thank you.

9 HEARING OFFICER BENSKO: Thank you, Debra, and
10 I want you to go out and talk to the gentleman from
11 Ameren and see if he can help you with your bill and
12 stuff.

13 MS. SANSOM: Well, I haven't got my bill yet.

14 HEARING OFFICER BENSKO: Okay. All righty.
15 Thank you, Debra.

16 Okay, Larry Ivory.

17 MR. IVORY: Thank you to the Illinois
18 Commission for this forum and, you know, that's one
19 of the things we can say about --

20 HEARING OFFICER BENSKO: Larry, could you turn
21 the mic up and state your name and spell it for the
22 court reporter.

1 MR. IVORY: The name is Larry Ivory, L-A-R-R-Y,
2 Ivory, I-V-O-R-Y. Again, my hat is off to the
3 Commission for this incredible forum, for their
4 people to come out and talk about a very important
5 issue. And I know that right now there is probably
6 no other topic as critical as the issue of energy,
7 affordable, reliable and efficient energy.

8 And, you know, from a Chamber point of
9 view we often -- you know, sometimes we have to make
10 some very sound decisions that we believe is
11 necessary at a time where it may be contested, at a
12 time that it may be difficult. We believe that it is
13 important to speak to the issue of energy because we
14 believe that that approach has to be balanced.

15 And as we get ready to make some
16 decision about what is in our collective best
17 interest, I think it becomes very apparent to us that
18 we want to make sure that everyone has an equal
19 opportunity to state their case, that people make
20 informed decisions, not based just on emotions.
21 Because we understand, you know, the sacrifice that
22 everyone has made when it comes to, you know, their

1 budget, their incomes, and everything else. And it
2 is very difficult to have any type of increase,
3 whether it be from an energy company or whether it be
4 from anything that you can imagine.

5 But I guess when we take a look back
6 at the current situation and talk about some of the
7 challenges that we are facing from a business side, I
8 think we look at it and say, you know, if a company
9 has a junk bond status, what does that really mean?
10 And from the investment background that I have with
11 25 years at Solomon and Smith Barney and Merrill
12 Lynch, is that I understand what junk bond status
13 means. I know that when a company gets in a place
14 where it gets downgraded to junk bond status, that it
15 obviously creates a problem, especially if you talk
16 about an industry that is very highly leveraged where
17 they are borrowing money on an ongoing basis. And
18 for us to not understand that Moody and Standards and
19 Poor's makes that decision independent from anyone
20 else's opinion, independent from my opinion,
21 independent from anyone's opinion in this place; they
22 make a decision based upon what they see is an

1 economic forecast for a particular company.

2 So with that being said, we cannot
3 dismiss the reality that when you have junk bond
4 status, that the cost of borrowing money will go up,
5 and as that goes up, it will have an impact upon the
6 customers and upon the company.

7 Now, what I think is real important
8 for us to kind of grapple with is that what do we do
9 as a collective community to make things better for
10 everyone. Well, I think one of the things that we
11 have to do is that we have to take a look and ask
12 Ameren and others to do a little bit more, to give a
13 little bit more and do a little bit more.

14 When I talk about doing a little bit
15 more, I mean doing more as education, because I
16 believe that a lot of times in the communities and
17 the people I represent all around the state of
18 Illinois, that a lot of people don't understand what
19 they can do to reduce their energy costs. So I
20 believe -- and I know you have been turning your
21 thermostats down, but there is some other things that
22 you can do also that I think can help individuals

1 reduce their costs of energy.

2 Now, that's not going to resolve all
3 the problems that we have as it relates to the debate
4 on energy, but it surely is something that we ought
5 to take a look at how we continue to improve the
6 educational process so people understand what their
7 costs are or how to reduce their costs.

8 The other issue, I guess, is as we
9 take a look at how do we have affordable, reliable,
10 and efficient energy is that the challenge in front
11 of us is that we have to rely upon the Commission and
12 others who have a lot more information perhaps to
13 make an informed decision as to what is the best
14 solution to this particular very serious problem.
15 And I think if we allow the information and they do
16 their job, I think they will arrive at a decision
17 that will make good fundamental business sense.

18 Because the other side of the equation
19 is that when you have energy companies and you create
20 an environment that is not conducive to the energy
21 companies, I believe that you end up with some other
22 problems later on. And like the bank says, you can

1 pay me now or pay me later, and I think it is
2 important that we take time to debate the issue, to
3 have the forum, to talk about what works, what
4 doesn't work. But also I think it is critically
5 important, too, that we be objective and deliberate
6 on what we believe is really a long term solution to
7 the issue that faces us today.

8 And so I appreciate the Commission and
9 the people in Decatur for giving us an opportunity to
10 really kind of express an opinion of concern, but
11 also not an opinion of desperation but an opinion of
12 concern about what decisions we are going to make and
13 what is the long term implications in terms of a
14 decision we are going to make.

15 Thank you very much.

16 HEARING OFFICER BENSKO: Thank you, Larry. And
17 Larry is the president of the Illinois State Black
18 Chamber of Commerce. So I just wanted to tell
19 everyone that.

20 Eula Rowe.

21 MS. ROWE: Thank you for allowing me to speak.
22 I don't have anything prepared, but as I sat back

1 there and listened to the different talkers express
2 themselves eloquently, I was thinking about my
3 situation.

4 HEARING OFFICER BENSKO: Can I interrupt you?
5 Could you state your name and spell it for the court
6 reporter?

7 MS. ROWE: Name is Eula, E-U-L-A, Rowe,
8 R-O-W-E. It is pronounced "Row." So I am a little
9 nervous here.

10 HEARING OFFICER BENSKO: Don't be nervous.

11 MS. ROWE: Although I am a dinosaur, I am not
12 yet at the senior citizen status. I am not on a
13 fixed income. I am employed. And I am almost, what
14 do you call that class, the working poor. But, you
15 know, in all of that I have been an Illinois Power or
16 Ameren customer since I moved to Illinois back in
17 1971. So I have had a lot of dealing and negotiating
18 with Illinois Power, Ameren, over the power bill. So
19 I am kind of familiar. I remember Mr. White, if
20 anybody can remember back that far.

21 But I said that to say this. You
22 know, working, the salary or my salary has not gone

1 up in three years. I have not had an increase. The
2 agency could not afford to give employees increases.
3 But everything else has gone up. My power bill is
4 more than my house payment and my car payment put
5 together. That's a pretty hefty bill. In fact, I
6 thought I was going to have a coronary when I got my
7 last bill, so I will probably be back negotiating
8 with the power company.

9 It is a blow when you get a \$600 bill.
10 There is no excuse for that. I can't imagine what I
11 have done. Like others that's spoken before, I
12 turned the thermostat down. I did inch it up a
13 little bit so I wouldn't sit in my house and freeze.
14 The gentleman that spoke about education, winterizing
15 the house, I have done everything imaginable to
16 winterize the house. But yet I have that type of
17 bill.

18 And as far as customer service goes,
19 you call in and you make arrangements, but there is a
20 Catch 22 with that arrangement. They defer the
21 payment, and you enter into an agreement that you
22 know when you enter into that agreement you can't

1 keep it, that you pay your current bill by the due
2 date plus a ridiculous amount on that back bill. And
3 you sit and you are terrified that when you don't
4 make it by that due date, the power company is going
5 to come out and shut you off. So, you know, it is a
6 matter of robbing Peter or paying Paul. And I know I
7 am not the only one in that situation.

8 And then to hear -- because I was
9 bound and determined, I went to the library looking
10 for you. You know, I have to. When people are in
11 that situation and they are on fixed incomes, they
12 can't. They just can't do it. And then an increase
13 on top of that, I mean, are you trying to kill the
14 poor people off? You can't -- you just can't meet
15 that. It's an impossible situation.

16 And, you know, as I said, I am not the
17 only one in that situation. There are many people, I
18 am sure, here that's in that working class, that's
19 not in that \$50,000 a year mark. I am below that.
20 So it's that working poor. And, yeah, there are
21 different agencies, Warm Neighbors, LIHEAP, those
22 types of programs. But my income is such that you

1 are not eligible for that, either. So you are in a
2 Catch 22.

3 So this is very serious if this
4 increase is allowed to take effect. If I can't pay a
5 \$600 bill, I can't imagine what, if this goes into
6 effect, what the next bill would be.

7 Thank you.

8 HEARING OFFICER BENSKO: Thank you, Eula. And,
9 you know, I would sure like you to talk to the people
10 here tonight. You might need to have an energy audit
11 or something like that to see where you could maybe
12 cut back on -- maybe the billing is wrong or
13 something like that or you could cut back, you know,
14 on some things. But I want you to talk to the people
15 here tonight. That's why we have them here. That's
16 why we and the Commerce Commission are here.

17 The last person that I am going to
18 call on tonight, State Representative Flider would
19 like to say some closing words for everybody, and
20 then I will adjourn the first portion. The court
21 reporter will go home. And then what we will do is
22 we will have the question and answer period.

1 REPRESENTATIVE FLIDER: Thank you, Mr. Hearing
2 Examiner.

3 And I think Eula Rowe put it very
4 succinctly. What you have here in this room, you
5 have average people, common people. These are people
6 who aren't here -- cannot possibly match wits with
7 the economists, with the lawyers who are going to be
8 representing the utility company, with the rate
9 experts. These are people who cannot go to the
10 Illinois Commerce Commission as experts and say,
11 "Here is the impact it is going to have on our
12 communities, our economy." But collectively you can
13 hear what the impact is going to be on them as
14 individuals. These are real people.

15 And I see some business folks here,
16 and not everybody has chosen to talk or testify. But
17 let's talk about what the impact of a rate increase
18 is going to have on our community in terms of what it
19 is going to do to our businesses.

20 Obviously, when you have somebody who
21 is getting a \$600 utility bill who had not expected
22 that, they are not going to be buying -- they are not

1 going to have any disposable income left. They are
2 not going to be able to go buy furniture. They are
3 not going to be able to go buy anything extra at the
4 store. They are going to be putting everything they
5 have into that utility bill. Who is going to suffer?
6 The business community.

7 Why aren't people getting raises?
8 Because businesses can't afford to give raises.
9 Nobody can give raises. People's income is stagnant.
10 The gap is growing between the haves and the
11 have-nots. And I am not trying to give some
12 political speech here, but the fact of the matter is
13 people are having a hard time surviving, much let
14 trying to get ahead. You have heard from people here
15 time after time talk about that impact.

16 And what I would just simply want to
17 conclude and ask the Illinois Commerce Commission to
18 do, Staff, the Commissioners, if they could take up
19 this issue, and this issue as you consider the
20 impact. I think it is pertinent, and I think it is
21 relevant. The issue is, if Ameren gets every penny
22 of its rate increase this time or if its rates go up,

1 what is going to be the impact on the people here in
2 this room, the people in this community, people
3 throughout central Illinois? What is it going to do
4 for our economy? And how is it going to make that
5 economy tumble any further, devolve any further, so
6 that they can't pay their utility bills, and Ameren
7 is going to have to come in and say, "We need even
8 more," next time. I mean, what's going to happen?
9 The spiral in a recessionary economy is not going to
10 be positive for our community. It is not going to be
11 positive for people. It is not even going to be
12 positive for Ameren.

13 So what we are asking the Illinois
14 Commerce Commission to do is think about that true
15 impact. Put yourself in the shoes of these folks.
16 These are everyday people. They are not going to be
17 able to testify about the economic impact, short
18 term, long term. But it is real. They are feeling
19 it. And if you listen very carefully, the impact is
20 going to crescendo across the entire economy, and we
21 are all going to be worse off with a major rate
22 increase.

1 Thank you.

2 HEARING OFFICER BENSKO: Thank you,
3 Representative.

4 And I want to thank your
5 representatives for being here tonight and speaking
6 on the record. I want to thank everyone in here
7 tonight that spoke. I hope it was more of a relaxed
8 atmosphere in here. There is a few of you in here
9 that I kind of coaxed into speaking tonight, and I am
10 glad you did because your feelings are being heard.

11 The only thing is that I do not get to
12 have an opinion. I am independent. I don't write up
13 a summary of how I thought the evening went or a
14 summary of how I thought, you know, you spoke or the
15 words that you spoke or anything about it. I am
16 independent. My job is to come here, collect the
17 information, and take it back. She has made an
18 accurate record of what you have said here tonight.
19 She will turn that record over to me. I will go
20 through it and look it over, and then it will be made
21 available to the Chairman, Commissioners, the staff,
22 the intervenors and anyone that would want it.

1 If someone -- at the last public
2 hearing that we did the other day, someone in the
3 audience asked if they could have a copy and, you
4 know, you can contact the Chief Clerk's office at the
5 Illinois Commerce Commission, and you have to pay per
6 page, you know, for it because it does cost us money
7 to make copies of it, but you, too, can have copies
8 of that.

9 But I want to commend everybody in the
10 room tonight. You know, the Company came up here;
11 they gave an explanation. You people spoke tonight.
12 You did very well tonight. And I can't tell you how
13 much we at the Commission appreciate it. Now I have
14 gone to some public hearings and no one has gotten up
15 to speak. And basically what that says to the
16 Commission is you don't -- you know, the people don't
17 care what you do, Commission, do whatever you want.

18 Well, tonight you have made comments,
19 and those comments are going to be made available to
20 all the parties that I told you about. And your
21 comments do matter to the Commerce Commission. It
22 was a pleasure for me to be here.

1 And now I am going to adjourn this
2 until Wednesday evening, 7:00 p.m. in Belleville.
3 And the court reporter is going to go away, and just
4 a short break, give us five minutes, and then we will
5 start the question and answer period. Gene and Randy
6 and I will answer any questions that you might have,
7 you know, of the Commerce Commission, and then the
8 representatives from the Company will come up and
9 they will answer any questions you have of them.

10 So I appreciate it, folks. Thank you
11 very much, and we will be back in five minutes.

12 (Whereupon the public forum in
13 this matter was continued until
14 February 13, 2008, at 7:00 p.m.
15 in Belleville, Illinois.)

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