

# The 25 Best Things of CUB's 25 Years

## IN THE BEGINNING

In 1983 an Illinois activist named Pat Quinn spearheaded a movement for a statewide referendum that overwhelmingly called for the creation of the Citizens Utility Board (CUB). The CUB Act was signed into law in 1983, and the group opened its doors in 1984.



That year, State Comptroller Roland Burris (left) and Gov. James Thompson (center) presented CUB with a \$100,000 state start-up loan. Accepting it are CUB Board President Howard Learner and Executive Director Susan Stewart. We paid the loan back, with interest, two years later.

### Best Quotable Quote

“The gold standard for consumer groups nationally is the Citizens Utility Board of Illinois. Since 1984, CUB, as it is known, has helped win hundreds of millions of dollars in utility rate decreases and refunds.”

— St. Louis Post-Dispatch columnist in 2006.

## 2 Best Recruitment Pitch

Pitches like this, on membership forms inside utility bills, helped CUB recruit 100,000 members in two years. In 1987, the utilities tried to kill CUB by winning a federal lawsuit to remove the inserts. So a law was passed to put them in state mailings—at no extra cost to taxpayers.



## 3 Biggest Electric Refunds

\$1.3 billion, ComEd, 1993  
\$1 billion, Ameren, ComEd, 2007

## 4 Biggest Gas Refund

\$100 million, Peoples Gas, 2006 (Largest gas refund in state history)

## 5 Biggest Phone Credit

\$224 million, SBC/Ameritech, 2002 (Largest in state history, about \$50 per phone line)

## 6 Best Fight Song

It wasn't unusual for CUB meetings to include songs in the early days. Here's one to the tune of Frere Jacques:

Where's our refund  
ComEd refund  
Pay up now!  
Pay up now!  
High rates are not funny  
Give us back our money  
Pay up now!  
Pay up now!



## 7 Cutest CUB Supporter



## 8 Best Consumer Quote

“CUB sure puts fire crackers under the utilities' butts!”

— A 79-year-old CUB member who got help in a dispute with ComEd.

## 9 Favorite CUB Fashion Statement

A hat normally worn to work the deep fryer at a fast-food joint was transformed into standard CUB battle gear by staffers who handed them out at anti-rate hike rallies in the 1980s and 1990s.



## 10 Biggest White Elephant

Illinois Power's Clinton nuclear plant was years behind schedule, 10 times over budget, and the subject of a “60 Minutes” expose. And IP wanted a \$3.5 billion rate hike to pay for it. In 1989, CUB led the charge that forced IP to reduce its request and convinced state regulators to stop IP from slapping customers with more than \$700 million in plant costs.



1984	1985	1987-89	1993	1997	2002-03	2006	2007
CUB opens its doors.	CUB wins landmark legislative review of utility plant-building costs to ensure we don't pay for wasteful spending.	CUB leads push to reject \$3.3 billion ComEd rate hike and wins hundreds of millions of dollars in savings for IP customers.	CUB helps win \$1.3 billion ComEd refund for consumers, plus a \$339 million rate cut.	CUB fights for and wins record 20 percent rate cut for most electric customers and 9-year rate freeze.	SBC customers enjoy a \$224 million credit after CUB negotiations with the company. Verizon customers get a \$25 million rate cut.	CUB uncovers improper deal between Peoples Gas and Enron affiliate. Leads to \$100 million refund for customers.	CUB helps kill ComEd and Ameren “reverse power auction” that led to skyrocketing electric bills. Consumers get \$1 billion refund.



## 11 Biggest White Elephant, Part II

Amazingly, ComEd said its \$3.3 billion rate hike to pay for the Byron and Braidwood nuclear plants would save customers money. In 1987, CUB helped convince state regulators otherwise. Their 4-3 vote against a rate hike marked the first time a ComEd increase was completely rejected.



## 12 Best Mascot

The brown furry blob in the picture is the CUB Bear, a familiar sight at CUB rallies in the 1980s. Here he fights "Greed E. Utility."

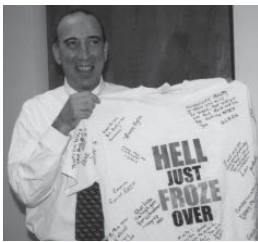
## 13 Best Photo with a Future President

Just before he skyrocketed to fame in 2004, then State Sen. Barack Obama posed with former CUB Executive Director Martin Cohen to celebrate our 20th Anniversary. "Illinois consumers are fortunate to have CUB fight on their behalf," Mr. Obama said.



## 14 Most Shocking Moment

In 2005, the governor surprisingly named CUB leader Martin Cohen as Illinois' top utility regulator. CUB's goodbye gift to Cohen was this t-shirt. Sadly, the thaw came quickly. Thanks to big-utility lobbying, consumer advocate Cohen became the first nominee ever to be rejected by the state Senate.



## 15 Best CUB Rally Sign

This Herrin man at a 2007 state capitol rally perfectly captured the sentiments of millions of electric customers who had been slapped with skyrocketing bills because of new



Ameren and ComEd power-pricing plans. CUB helped lead the "rate-hike rebellion" of 2007 that led to \$1 billion in refunds.

## 16 Strangest Consumer Request

CUB gets more than 9,000 phone calls and e-mails a year from utility consumers with questions, concerns, or complaints. But nothing beat the lady who once asked us to videotape "Oprah" for her.

## 17 Best Quote About CFLs

"The money that we save on the electric bill pays for a trip to our favorite restaurant. The only thing is the light's so good now we really have to dust better."

—A *West Chicago* couple who were among more than 18,000 people in 2008 to take CUB's "Get Green" pledge to use Compact Fluorescent Light bulbs (CFLs).

## 18 Biggest Cut in GAS BILL

**\$12,764!** CUB got the big credit for a Chicago furniture company that had been erroneously billed by Peoples Gas.

## 19 Biggest Cut in ELECTRIC BILL

**\$5,500!** CUB convinced ComEd to waive a deposit it wanted to slap on a Bartlett business owner after he said the amount would "definitely break his company."

## 20 Biggest Cut in PHONE BILL

**\$13,486.05!** CUB helped a Christian bookstore that faced this large debt from McLeod USA after the company had sold its phone and Internet service that the Evergreen Park building's wiring was too old to support.

## 21 Best CUB Pioneer

Sue Stewart made sure CUB never had a glass ceiling. Our first executive director faced intense pressure from the start: Under the state law that created it, CUB would have been killed if it didn't get 10,000 members in three years. It took only three weeks. Stewart then led CUB through some of its toughest battles, saving consumers billions of dollars before her tenure ended in 1993. CUB is eternally grateful for her dedication, toughness, and wisdom.



## 22 Biggest Phone Clinic

Outreach Director Sarah Moskowitz (right) strikes a patriotic pose at a phone-bill clinic in 2007. That was the year a record 208 people came to a Joliet mall hungry for CUB's money-saving tips.



## 23 Best CUB Clinic Savings

At a 2007 phone clinic in Gage Park, Associate Director Pat Clark helped a consumer with a bill so bloated that she was overpaying by \$1,200 a year.

## 24 Best Award-winning Web site

CUB is the only consumer group in the nation with a free "Phone Savings Center," at [www.CitizensUtilityBoard.org](http://www.CitizensUtilityBoard.org), that offers ways for consumers to save on their local, long-distance and wireless bills. CUB's site earned a "Golden Trumpet" award from the Chicago Publicity Club in 2006.

## 25 Best Photo with a Future Governor

In late 2008, CUB Executive Director David Kolata posed with the man who had rallied so much support for CUB's creation—just before he became Illinois governor. Then Lt. Gov. Pat Quinn gave us a "Hometown Hero Award," saying CUB was "a model for the whole country."



## 2008

CUB wins \$20 credit for Illinois consumers who sign up for one of the nation's best long-distance deals. (See article on p. 2)

CUB launches the Cellphone Saver, becoming the nation's first nonprofit group to offer a free online tool that analyzes wireless bills.

CUB's other online tool, the Local Phone Cost-cutter, shows consumers how to cut costs by a total of more than \$4 million.

CUB holds record 58 phone clinics, helping consumers save hundreds of dollars a year.

CUB hands out 100,000 "CFL" light bulbs that can each save consumers up to \$50 over their lifetime. That's a total potential savings of more than \$5 million.

CUB turns back more than \$200 million in proposed gas and electric rate hikes.

CUB celebrates 25th anniversary fighting for consumers.

## 2009