



SUN-TIMES NEWS GROUP

Your local news source :: Select a community or newspaper »

Select a community



Select a STNG publication or site



Ranch & 2-Story Duplex Homes

The Carriage Homes AT RAVINE WOODS



CLASSIFIEDS



SOUTHTOWNSTAR

southtownstar.com Member of the Sun-Times News Group



59°F Overcast

Weather • Traffic

Search »

Site STNG

Make us your Home Page

- Subscribe
- Report delivery issues
- Place an ad
- Buy Photos

Home | Neighborhood Star | News | Sports | Business | Entertainment | Classifieds | Lifestyles | Ebert | Search | Archives | Blogs | RSS

- Business  
 Business Archive  
 Columnists  
 Bob Bong  
 Jim Harmening  
 Joseph Mattera  
 Mike Nolan  
 Guy Tridgell  
 Joseph Walczak  
 The Fixer

BUSINESS :: PRINTER FRIENDLY » EMAIL ARTICLE »



### The utility world's momentous year

January 4, 2008

By David Kolata

It was a momentous year for utility customers, filled with rebellion, rip-offs and real opportunities (finally) to cut phone bills significantly. Here's a rundown of the utility world's top events in 2007 and what they mean for consumers in 2008.

#### Electric rate-shock rebellion

The year began with a shocking blow to consumers, as ComEd's new plan to purchase power - the "reverse auction" - caused electric rates to skyrocket. The auction was complex, but the core problem was not: The scheme presupposed a competitive marketplace that didn't exist. Forced to pay unfair prices, consumers revolted. In the end, the General Assembly passed a law that requires ComEd to issue about \$500 million in refunds over three years. Just as importantly, a more consumer-friendly power-purchasing plan replaced the reverse auction. The new state-run Illinois Power Agency will use the collective buying power of consumers to negotiate for lower electricity prices beginning in 2009. While the IPA has the right goal and many of the right tools, it must make the right decisions to keep power prices in check. Already, it faces a key one: Will it prioritize energy efficiency and measures to reduce electricity demand? That's the most affordable way to meet our electricity needs. If the IPA doesn't and sides with ComEd, there's probably trouble ahead.

#### Gas rip-offs that never die

On another energy front, consumers continued to struggle with unregulated gas suppliers such as U.S. Energy. In fact, CUB showed that more than 90 percent of unregulated offers were bad deals, losing customers hundreds of dollars on average. The year ended on a more positive note, as a company called IGS responded to CUB's complaints by offering a plan that guaranteed moderate savings through October 2008.

#### New calling plans, cable rules

Phone callers had new opportunities to save in 2007. Thanks to the Citizens Utility Board, AT&T is required to offer three new low-cost "Consumer's Choice" calling plans. In fact, CUB helped the average consumer save about \$170 a year on local bills. That doesn't include savings from long distance, where providers like Pioneer Telephone offer plans at 2 to 3 cents per minute. If you're paying more than \$25 a month, visit www.CitizensUtilityBoard.org. 2007 also marked the first time the average family spent more on cell phones than on landline service. That's why later in 2008 CUB will offer a state-of-the-art online tool to recommend the wireless plan that's right for you. Long-suffering cable customers also got good news in 2007. State lawmakers gave Illinois the country's toughest consumer-protection standards.

However, the fight for fair rates never ends. As CUB battles 10 rate-hike proposals, it's obvious that Illinois utilities have made a New Year's resolution-to make you pay more. But CUB's made a resolution of its own: Not without a fight.

Citizens Utility Board executive director David Kolata writes a column each month. To reach CUB, call (800) 669-5556 or e-mail info@citizensutilityboard.org.

Ads by Google  
 Save on Energy Bills Now  
 Lower Your Energy Bills Signup Today with Ambit energy  
 www.bigsaving.biz

Energy Consulting-ComEd  
 Experienced energy procurement help with no supplier affiliations.

BUILDING ON OUR COMMITMENT

Opening 2011 in New Lenox

SHOW YOUR SUPPORT & ACT TODAY  
 CLICK HERE

VIDEO :: MORE »

- Four Dead, Nine Missing After Powerful Storm
- Which GOP Candidates Are Dishing the Dirt?
- Clemens Denies Steroid Use on '60 Minutes'

TOP STORIES ::

- NEWS: When stars come home
- BUSINESS: More changes for ahead for recording industry
- SPORTS: LSU, Ohio feeling needy
- ENTERTAINMENT: Mathison offers dance lessons to help AIDS group
- LIFESTYLES: "Mommy cards" the new chic parenting accessory

Car seat - too small.

[www.cornerstoneenergygroup.com](http://www.cornerstoneenergygroup.com)

**New Business Opportunity**

Run Your Own Energy Saving BusinessPLC Seeks Partners in the USA  
[www.enigin.net](http://www.enigin.net)

**Ambit Energy Saves Money**

Deregulation of Public UtilitiesSave Money, Make Money with Gas  
[www.ambitenergyil.info](http://www.ambitenergyil.info)

**Energy Efficient Heater**

Special Offer \$297 Free Shipping!Heard on Paul Harvey News  
[www.EdenPureStore.com/Efficiency](http://www.EdenPureStore.com/Efficiency)

---

[southtownstar.com: Feedback](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [About Us](#) | [Advertise With Us](#) | [Media Kit](#) | [Make us your Home Page](#)

**SouthtownStar: Report delivery issues** | [Subscribe](#) | [Online Photo Store](#) | [Keepsakes](#)

**Affiliates:** [RogerEbert.com](#) | [SearchChicago - Autos](#) | [SearchChicago - Homes](#) | [SearchChicago - Jobs](#) | [NeighborhoodCircle.com](#) | [Centerstage](#) **Partner:** [NBC5.com](#)  
**Express Links:** [TV Listings](#) | [Video](#) | [Yellow Pages](#) | [Submissions](#) | [Obituaries](#) | [Eating In](#) | [Restaurant Reviews](#) | [Advertising](#) | [Media Kit](#)



© Copyright 2008 Digital Chicago, Inc. | [Terms of Use](#) • [Privacy Policy](#) • [Submission Guidelines](#)