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ComEd Doesn't Deserve Rate Hike, Says Atty. Gen., CUB

Bob Roberts Reporting

CHICAGO (WBBM) - The Illinois Attorney General's office and the Citizens Utility Board say ComEd does not deserve the \$361 million rate hike the utility is requesting from the Illinois Commerce Commission.

WBBM's Bob Roberts reports.

CUB Executive Director David Kolata said Tuesday that the "small army" of lawyers, accountants and engineers who have studied the request for the consumer advocacy group and the attorney general's office determined that ComEd overstated its costs and understated its income.

"What our experts have found is that they are essentially making enough right now to make a profit and provide reliable service," he said.

At most, Kolata says, ComEd should receive an increase of \$39-million.

Edison filed its request in October.

ComEd wants the Commission to approve a dramatic change in how the company recovers the cost of storm-related repairs and investments in new "smart grid" technology.

It wants the right to impose a rider to automatically recover the costs of improved technology to help locate and repair outages on the electric grid. Kolata said the plan puts all of the risks of higher costs on the consumer and fails to account for cost savings or increased income that might offset those expenses.

Com Ed released a statement in which it says it can prove otherwise. It said that between 2004 and 2006, its transformer costs more than doubled, overhead wire increased 59 percent, underground cable increased 48 percent and utility poles increased 43 percent.

It said it intends to invest \$1.7 billion in its distribution system by the time the Commission rules in September, that the demand for power continues to increase and that ComEd must continue to invest to keep its system modern and robust as well as safe and reliable.

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