

LOCAL 

ComEd proposes another rate hike

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By Theresa Gutierrez

The cost for electricity could be going up yet again.**Commonwealth Edison is proposing a rate hike at the tune of \$361 million. The company position: the increase will help pay to bring power into your home.**

The proposed rate increase is on top of 2 percent hike that is set to take effect in June. The Illinois Commerce Commission is gearing up for public hearings on the proposed rate hike next week. Many consumer advocates are prepared to wage a fight on any future hikes and surcharges.

AARP, the Citizens Utility Board and the Office of the Illinois Attorney General have joined forces to strongly oppose ComEd's proposed electricity rate increases and new surcharges. With the ICC's public hearings on the issue set to begin next week, the consumer groups urge the commission to say no way to ComEd's rate hikes.

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"This is a big rate hike that ComEd doesn't need, it doesn't deserve, we're encouraging everyone who is concerned about it to have their voice be heard," said Dave Kolata, Citizens Utility Board.

AARP stands in opposition to more ComEd rate hikes and surcharges.

"We are urging the Illinois Commerce Commission to say no way to this proposal because it's going to hit families, older people and small businesses too hard," said Evelyn Gooden, AARP state president.

ComEd has requested at \$361.3 million annual increase for its electric customers from the Illinois Commerce Commission. This request includes an increase in the customer charge and the meter charge and distribution facilities charge. In addition, ComEd is also seeking to apply new surcharges called riders to customers' bills.

"We've got six of the fastest growing counties in the United States here in our service territory. Kendall County happens to be No. 2 in the United States in terms of growth. So we're out having to put new infrastructure in in places where we haven't had it before," said Ann Pramaggiore, ComEd executive vice president.

"Their estimate is anywhere from \$6 in an average \$75 a month bill, which we think will probably even be higher than that.," said Scott Musser, AARP lobbyist.

The two new rider surcharges on the bill would apply to new technological investments and storm expense adjustments.

"We spend a billion dollars a year on capital, on new investment, a billion dollars a year on just operating costs and our rates don't cover that," said Bob McDonald, ComEd chief financial officer.

People on the street say they are getting hit at the grocery store, at the gas pumps and now in their own homes, and they are fed up.

"It seems like everybody wants to nickel and dime the common working person," said Carl Underwood, Chicago resident.

"You got to be a Philadelphia lawyer to figure out your cell phone bill.

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And I don't want the electric companies to go the same way," said Tom McTige, Chicago resident.

At next week's hearings customers have a chance to voice their feelings about the two surcharges to their ComEd bill. The first public hearing is scheduled for next Wednesday at the Illinois Commerce Commission headquarters, 160 N. LaSalle. Another hearing will follow on Thursday in Joliet at Joliet Central High.

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