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- New Baby
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## Seniors Speak Out Against Possible ComEd Rate Hike

### ComEd Says Costs Are Rising; Customers Say They Can't Afford Higher Rates

At a time when gas prices are skyrocketing, the cost of even basic foods is soaring, and falling property values are making homeowners feel poorer, Commonwealth Edison wants to take a bigger bite out of your wallet.

But, as CBS 2's Derrick Blakley reports, on Wednesday night 80-year-old Austin resident Florita Esther and other seniors told state regulators they'd had enough.

"Seniors, we are poor," Esther said. "And we cannot afford for the rate to go up."

ComEd is asking for a \$361 million rate hike – about 8 percent on the average electric bill. The utility says demand for electricity is growing, the system needs modernization and their costs are increasing.

"Transformers have doubled, costs of wire has gone up 50 percent, costs of poles up over 40 percent within a 2-year period," said ComEd Executive Vice President Anne Pramaggiore.

But consumer watchdogs insist the hike isn't justified, and that ComEd's doing just fine.

"On Wall Street, they say they're doing very well, making record profits," said David Kolata of the [Citizens Utility Board](#). "On Main Street, they always plead poverty and say they need higher rates."

And no one feels the pinch more than seniors. Figures show some pay up to 25 percent of their income for utilities.

"The citizens of Illinois, all citizens of Illinois, should be outraged by this," said ComEd customer Elaine Hodges.

"I'm being tossed and turned by high gas prices, high food prices, everything just seems to be going up, up and away," said ComEd customer William Kyle.

The Illinois Commerce Commission is holding another public hearing Thursday night at Joliet Central High School.

If you can't attend the hearing, you can still give the ICC your opinion online through their [Web site](#) or even by phone, at (800) 524-0795.

The ICC has until September to decide whether ComEd can raise rates.

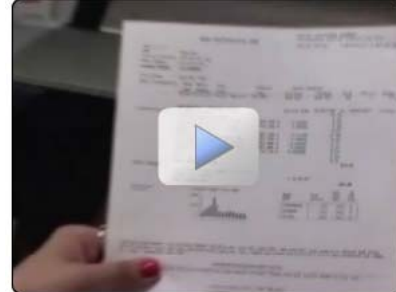
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