



## Nicor Gas files delivery rate increase for extra \$140 million

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After nearly two weeks of warnings, Nicor Gas did Tuesday what company officials had been promising -- filed for a delivery rate hike.

The Naperville-based natural gas utility is seeking an additional \$140 million to help alleviate rising expenses and consumers not paying their bills. Yet, Tuesday's action will make bills even higher -- by roughly \$4.60 per month.

Consumer advocates, including the Chicago-based Citizens Utility Board, plan to oppose the hike.

"Consumers have every reason to be skeptical about this latest attempt at raising rates," said CUB Executive Director David Kolata. "We haven't seen any evidence at all that Nicor deserves a big rate hike. With a struggling economy, this request also comes at the worst possible time. Every day, we receive calls from consumers faced with impossible choices between heating and eating and between paying for prescription drugs and paying their utility bills. A Nicor rate hike would make this bad situation even worse."

The case was filed before the Illinois Commerce Commission and a decision is expected around March. The rate increase would not apply to the cost of the gas, which is passed through to consumers without mark up.

Current rates do not consider about \$750 million in past and planned infrastructure improvements since the company's last rate case in 2004, the company said.

"We have kept our rate relief request to the minimum necessary to meet our obligations to provide safe and reliable service and to keep our company, an important contributor to the Illinois economy, financially healthy and moving forward," Nicor CEO Russ M. Strobel said in a statement.