

Bradley pushes ICC to reject proposed Ameren rate hike

BY BECKY MALKOVICH, THE SOUTHERN

Calling it a "bad faith request," State Sen. John Bradley is urging the Illinois Commerce Commission to reject a proposed rate hike for customers of Ameren Illinois.

The \$207 million increase in electric and natural gas delivery rates proposed by Ameren would affect thousands of local customers of AmerenCIPS, a group already hit hard by rate increases that went into effect last year, the Marion Democrat said.

"The middle class is under attack and this is just another example of it," Bradley said. "We've got to fight this to the very end."

The ICC is scheduled to either approve or reject the Ameren proposal by Sept. 30. ICC spokesman Brian Sterling said he was unsure when the decision will be handed down, but did say it would be announced in an open meeting, possibly Sept. 23 or 24.

The meeting is one Bradley plans to attend, and he has requested time to address the ICC before the decision is announced.

"I will say something to the effect that this is a bad faith request by Ameren and ought to be dismissed out of hand. The ICC needs to be reminded that they told us after the last increase that they would be watchdogs, not lapdogs. It is the ICC's duty to protect the public," Bradley said. "I can think of no more clear example of that duty than in this case, where a company paid hundreds of millions in refunds and rebates and then turns around and asks for an increase in an amount more than it paid out."

The increase, Ameren spokesman Leigh Morris said, would allow the companies to recover present and ongoing costs, as well as continue making infrastructure investments.

"The major reason for the proposed rate adjustment is that our revenues are inadequate. They are not sufficient for us to maintain and improve our electric and gas delivery systems in Illinois," Morris said. "It is important to note that the adjustment has nothing to do with the cost of electricity or natural gas. We derive no profit from natural gas or electricity. We simply charge the customer what we pay.

"Additional revenue is needed to allow us to invest in reliability and related projects for all three companies," Morris said.

Delivery costs represent 25 to 33 percent of a customer's bill, Morris said, although that percentage varies depending on the bill.

Morris did not have figures available showing the average increase to customers' bills.

If approved, the hikes would go into effect no sooner than mid-October, Morris said.

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To leave comments about the proposed Ameren Illinois rates hikes, call (800) 524-0795 or visit www.icc.illinois.gov/docket/comment.