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## Ameren gas, power rates to rise; state panel OKs \$162 million hike

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Ameren Illinois customers will see their gas and electric rates rise by \$162 million, the Illinois Commerce Commission ruled Wednesday morning.

The increase in Ameren delivery charges -- which can take place as soon as Monday -- represents a nearly \$85 million reduction from the \$247 million that Ameren had originally requested last year.

What's more, the rate hike approved Wednesday is slightly less than the \$163.6 million rate increase recommended by a panel of administrative law judges after a weeklong hearing in June.

Ameren spokeswoman Victoria Busch said most customers will see their monthly bills increase or decrease as follows:

- Ameren IP customers will see the electricity usage portion rise between \$6 and \$18, while the gas usage portion will increase between \$4 and \$9 per month.
- Ameren CIPS ratepayers will see electricity costs rise by \$2 to \$5 per month, with the gas portion rising between \$2 and \$6.
- Ameren CILCO customers will see their electric usage charge actually drop by 55 cents per month, while natural gas bills will decrease by up to \$9 during colder months and increase by about \$2 the rest of the year.

The nonprofit Citizens Utility Board, or CUB, has announced it will appeal the commission's ruling to the commission, and if that fails, to a state appellate court.

Outside experts hired by CUB had estimated that Ameren could justify a rate increase of no more than \$58 million.

The three Ameren entities -- IP, CIPS and CILCO -- initially sought a \$247 million total increase from the commission to offset higher energy and other costs but lowered that to \$207 million.

Scott Musser, a spokesman for AARP Illinois, said the Ameren rate increase is coming at a bad time for his group's members in view of soaring prices for food and energy.

Many AARP members have already downsized and practiced greater energy conservation, though there's only so much they can cut back, Musser said.

"But once you start increasing the fixed costs, you can't get around it," he said.

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