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## Nicor wins \$69M-rate increase

By Steve Daniels  
March 25, 2009

(Crain's) — Nicor Inc. won a \$69-million rate increase from the Illinois Commerce Commission on Wednesday, less than half of what the Naperville-based natural gas utility requested.

The hike, approved unanimously by the five state utility regulators, will add roughly \$2.25, or 2.4%, to the average monthly gas bill of \$92, the company said. Nicor said when it filed for the increase months ago that the requested \$140-million hike would add \$4.60, or 5%, to the average bill.

The Citizens Utility Board, Chicago's primary advocate for utility customers, said it would appeal the decision.

"We're disappointed," CUB executive director David Kolata said. "This type of rate increase couldn't come at a worse time."

A Nicor spokeswoman said the company was still reviewing the order and would have more to say later.

Separately, the commission denied the utility's request to adjust its rates automatically each month to compensate for changes in the weather and customer conservation habits. Typically, gas utility revenues fluctuate significantly depending on temperatures during the winter months because customers are charged based on how much gas they consume.

Nicor's preferred approach, which some environmentalists support as a way to encourage more energy conservation, is designed to ensure utilities get a relatively set revenue stream while their customers either save on heating bills when weather is colder-than-normal or pay a bit more during warmer winters.

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