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## CUB has been saving citizens money for 25 years

### Citizens Utility Board proud of history of helping consumers cut phone, energy bills

By **Steve Tarter**  
of the **Journal Star**

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PEORIA — The Chicago-based Citizens Utility Board may have saved Illinois citizens more than \$10 billion in its 25-year history, but executive director David Kolata said the group also has helped provide something else: moral support.

"The biggest issue for consumers is how to reduce energy and telephone bills. We tell them the two most important things you can do is let your voice be heard and learn a few simple things. We call it savings without sacrifice," he said.

"Many consumers are paying needlessly high bills because they sign up for phone features they don't want or need on plans that don't fit their calling patterns," said Kolata.

The money consumers might save by changing their phone plan can be spent on something more important, he said.

"Illinois consumers have a potential economic stimulus package worth more than \$1.5 billion buried in their own bloated phone bills. Making cuts in calling costs - without sacrificing service - can reap significant savings and help spark the economy," said Kolata.

Taking on powerful utilities and giant telecommunications companies has never been an easy task, said Kolata. "One utility will spend two or three times our annual budget - about \$2 million - on a single case," he said.

The organization is budgeted through the generosity of about 100,000 members throughout the state, said Kolata. "We survive on the basis of \$15 and \$20 donations from those members," he said.

While fighting for funding, CUB is faced with keeping up with ever-changing technology, said Kolata. "All the changes in technology have led to a lot of confusion for consumers," he said.

"In a wildly shifting marketplace, the consumer needs information," said Kolata, noting that the citizens group has tried to use the latest technology in getting the word out on how to save money.

"Technology has an upside. We were the first consumer group in the country to offer Cellphone Saver, an online tool that helps consumers find the cheapest cell phone plan," he said.

Kolata says CUB has saved the Illinois consumer an average of \$575 a year on phone service alone. In recent years, CUB has traveled the state providing phone clinics where consumers have individual telephone bills analyzed for savings.

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