



## LOCAL NEWS

**Public hearings address Ameren rate hike**[Print Page](#)***Utility pulled down \$600 million in profits in 2008*****By STEVE RENSBERRY**  
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Published: Thursday, October 1, 2009 10:53 AM CDT

Is there anywhere for the price of utilities in Illinois to go but up?

You would think not given that Ameren Illinois Utilities is on the cusp of seeing through another rate increase, this time valued at approximately \$226 million.

The move has brought stark criticism from Illinois' Citizen's Utility Board, which has recently ratcheted up efforts to fight the increase.

According to CUB, the rate hike would consist of about \$181 million in higher electric fees and \$45 million from increases in the price of natural gas.

The first of four public hearings was conducted Tuesday in Springfield, with a second hearing scheduled for Monday, Oct. 5 at the Kenneth Hall Regional Office Building, 1100 Eastport Plaza in Collinsville. Hearings also are scheduled for Oct. 27 in Pekin and on Nov. 2 in Decatur.

"The Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC) needs to hear how this rate hike would burden hardworking Illinois consumers," CUB Executive Director David Kolata said.

"Ameren's parent company reaped more than \$600 million in 2008 profits and consumers are struggling to pay their bills. It's the worst time for a hike," the watchdog group said in a statement issued last week.

Estimates suggest Ameren Illinois residential electric customers can expect to pay from \$60 to \$100 more per year for the service, with residential natural gas customers paying upwards of \$60 per year more.

If approved, the increased rates will not go into effect until May of next year.

"We recognize that any rate increase will be cause for concern. However, be assured that our proposed rate increases are necessary to provide the essential financial resources to meet our obligations to our customers," Ameren Illinois' President and Chief Executive Scott Cisel said in a statement made during the time of the filing.

Ameren contends the increase is necessary to meet the growing demand for energy and to improve the reliability of its distribution system.

The rate-hike plan will affect customers of Ameren CILCO, AmerenCIPS, AmerenCIPS-Metro East and AmerenIP. Ameren's petition to increase rates had been suspended by the ICC pending a full review of the proposal.

Customers of the utility who wish to comment may attend a meeting or file a comment online at the ICC's Web site, located at [www.icc.illinois.gov/consumer](http://www.icc.illinois.gov/consumer) or by calling 1-800-524-0795.

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