

## Ameren's proposed rate hike under fire



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By Ed McMenam  
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PEKIN, Ill. -

Consumer advocate groups and two state representatives gathered Wednesday to speak against the \$226 million rate increase requested by Ameren Illinois Utilities, which includes AmerenCILCO, AmerenIP and AmerenCIPS.

"We're here today to send a message to the Illinois Commerce Commission and to Ameren that we feel a rate hike at this time is not something that the people of Illinois, and our communities, can afford," said state Rep. Mike Smith, D-Canton. "At a time when consumers are having immense trouble finding the money to pay their bills, buy their medicine, send their kids through college and just sustain themselves, Ameren's request is way off base, in my opinion.

"It's more important than ever that we stand up as consumers to say enough is enough and we can't pay any more."

Smith, State Rep. Jehan Gordon, and representatives from the Citizens Utility Board and AARP spoke at Pekin City Hall and encouraged residents to sign petitions and contact the ICC regarding the proposed rate increase.

CUB announced its "Stop Ameren" campaign and released a CUB-commissioned study of 115 utility companies that placed Ameren as one of the most wasteful.

"Plain and simple, Ameren executives are not spending their customers' money wisely and they have no business asking for a massive rate hike," said CUB Communications Director Jim Chilsen. "Somebody needs to tell Ameren executives that Illinois consumers are not their own personal ATM."

He said the study estimated what an average electric company would spend and then compared that to what Ameren actually spent in 2008.

It looked at administrative, distribution and customer care spending and showed that Ameren spent \$159 million above what would be expected in an "average utility company," he said, placing it in the bottom third.

The ICC will hold a series of hearings, including one on Oct. 27 in Pekin, before deciding in April whether to grant the \$226 million rate hike. Smith said the petitions and communications will be presented to the ICC and added to the case file leading up to the decision.

The requested increase follows a \$162 million increase granted last year.

Ameren spokesman Neal Johnson said the power company chooses to request smaller, more frequent rate increases instead of a massive increase every five or more years.

"We estimate that there are over 2,000 pages of testimony that (the Citizen's Utility Board has) filed over the past few days," Johnson said. "We need to look at the testimony and we need to do the analysis on the

testimony, and then we will file our response.

"We still believe our delivery service rate case is sound and accurate and reflects the true cost of providing safe, reliable service to our customers."

Johnson said the increase is needed to cover the increased cost of doing business, among other needs.

"We're in an economic downturn, but that doesn't stop the cost of materials," he said.

Jim McGill, legislative liaison for the Pekin chapter of the AARP, said representatives from the group will be attending all of ICC's scheduled hearings on behalf of its 1.8 million Illinois members.

"These rate increases will devastate the finances of families and older individuals who are struggling just to stay above water," he said. "We believe the ICC should do its job of balancing the interests of utility companies with those of the public."

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nonyadamn

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Were in an economic downturn, but that doesnt stop the cost of materials,

What materials.....You mean sports cars and 3000 dollar bonuses. Start by cleaning up your s\*it then ask us for some money. No utilities company can claim they are hurting. In an economic downturn such as weve had the only companies making any money are the utility companies. How long is it going to take to get some competition for these idiots here in Illinois. Ameren and Comcast must be owned by the same idiots.

nonyadamn

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Also,

why dont you try taking some of the money from the bogus delivery charges you charge us. It costs more for the delivery charge then it does for actual power. Delivery....LMFAO what a joke!!!!!!!!!!

Whitelilac

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I asked this awhile back when we were threatened with a hike before .What happens when no one is able to pay their bill ?

dlosh

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Time to write Burriss, Durbin, and Quinn to get regulation back that Blago gave away when he was paid off to do so.

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