

**LOCAL NEWS****Ameren's proposed rate hike opposed**[Print Page](#)***New ICC chairman raises hope for consumers*****By STEVE RENSBERRY**  
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Ameren Illinois Powers' lingering rate increase awaits an Illinois Commerce Commission ruling this spring but continues to stir opposition.

Although local reaction has been relatively muted, a group lead by Illinois State Rep. Bob Flider (D-Mt. Zion) was expected to testify Thursday at an ICC hearing in Springfield in an effort to stop the planned increase.

The company filed a request in June, 2009, to increase rates capable of generating approximately \$162 million.

That amount is now down to about \$142 million, Citizens Utility Board spokesman Jim Chilsen said, as negotiations continue among various interests, the ICC and Ameren.

The amount includes increases in electrical rates as well as those for natural gas and would amount to an annual increase of roughly \$60 per household.

Chilsen said they still consider the planned hike to be an exorbitant amount and are hoping that in the end they will be able to bring about cuts and possibly even a refund for consumers.

"We continue to fight it and do everything we can to lower it," Chilsen said.

Decisions on requested rate changes generally occur about 11 months after the request is filed, which would mean it would come down sometime in April or May.

A similar request in Missouri by AmerenUE that would amount to roughly \$402 million remains undecided, although Missouri's Public Service Commission just last week turned down the company's request for a temporary increase of \$37 million. The PSC also blocked a request by Ameren to clarify rules related to how far groups can go with public relations efforts aimed at influencing the commission's decision.

St. Louis-based Ameren Corporation is the parent company of AmerenIP, AmerenUP, AmerenCIPS and AmerenCILCO.

Public hearings on the Illinois request were conducted last October in Springfield, Collinsville and Pekin. A fourth hearing was conducted on Nov. 2 in Decatur. Details of the hearings were to be recorded and considered in the ICC's final deliberations, but have not been made public.

The commission maintains a Web site at [www.icc.illinois.gov/](http://www.icc.illinois.gov/) with limited details available through a docket search function. The AmerenIP cases are No. 09-0308 and 09-0311 and have been consolidated with those of AmerenCILCO and AmerenCIPS.

Meanwhile, on Jan. 4 Illinois Governor Pat Quinn named Chicago Alderman Manny Flores to the position of ICC chair.

Quinn called Flores a consumer advocate, giving some consumer groups hope that he could possibly reduce what they see as a historical tendency for the ICC to side with power companies.

The appointment also received praise from the Citizens Utility Board.

Flores replaces outgoing chairman Charles Box, whose term was up in January, 2009. Box has continued to serve until an appointment was made. Each of the commission's five members are appointed by the governor, with no more than three belonging to any one political party.

Flores was elected to the Chicago City Council in 2003.

The ICC Web site contains a consumer comment section. Inquiries also can be made by calling 800-524-0795.

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