

CUB VOICE



"Get Green" Issue 2009

A Publication of the Citizens Utility Board

www.CitizensUtilityBoard.org

WHAT'S Inside

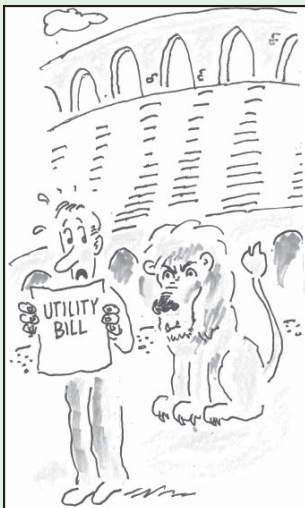
Remember life before CUB?

CUB awarded for consumer advocacy.

Special "Get Green" section.

Win a month of free power.

He's fighting for CUB, even in death.



"I heard the utility company had hired new bill collectors, but this is ridiculous."

See more captions on p. 2!

\$1 billion battle!

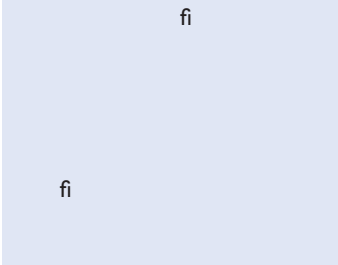
Despite profits, utility companies want more

Consumers may be struggling with a bad economy, but the parent companies of Illinois utilities are raking in huge profits as they fight CUB in more than \$1 billion in rate-hike cases.

CUB's review of seven major Illinois utilities shows that their parent companies made up to \$12.9 billion and paid their top executives a range from \$2.5 million to \$20 million in compensation in 2008. Compare that to federal statistics that show a median household income of about \$51,000 in Illinois.

Meanwhile, CUB is appealing about \$500 million in utility rate hikes, and challenging another \$500 million in proposed increases. The latest are Ameren's quest for a \$226 million increase in the rates it charges to deliver natural gas and electricity to homes, and Illinois American Water's \$58.6 million rate-hike request. And there's

Join CUB's Rate-hike Fighters Hall of Fame



more: ComEd is expected to file for an increase within a year.

"A rate hike is never good news, but

Continued on p. 6

Don't let Ameren and ComEd hijack your electric rate cut!

A new rate-hike plan by Ameren and one expected by ComEd threaten to wipe out a recent decrease of up to 9 percent for electric customers.

The decrease, generating nearly \$100 a year in average savings, came after the Illinois Power Agency (IPA) made its first electricity buy on behalf of the state's utility customers. CUB helped in the push to establish the IPA and ditch the state's old "reverse auction" power-pricing system, which sent rates skyrocketing in 2007.

The savings consumers will see come from supply charges, roughly two thirds of the total bill, which cover

the cost of the electricity itself.

The other third of the bill, the delivery charges, is where the utility makes its profit. That part of the bill is not affected by the June 1 decrease. However, just days after the new, lower rates took effect, Ameren filed for a \$226 million delivery increase. ComEd has indicated it also will seek an increase within a year.

What are your new electric rates?

See CUB's chart on p. 7

From the desk of...

Here's how you fight rate hikes

David Kolata



What a time for the utilities to go on a \$1 billion rate-hike binge.

We never welcome rate-hike proposals, but the timing is particularly

horrible as consumers struggle through an economic crisis while utility parent companies rake in huge profits. (See chart on p. 6.)

Yeah, we're fed up too. That's why I'm asking you to join our "Rate-hike Fighters Hall of Fame" by giving \$25 or more to CUB—in honor of our 25 years helping you save more than \$10 billion. We're working overtime to block this billion-dollar assault on Illinois consumers, so please help us fight.

There's one more thing you can do to fight the rate hikes: practice energy efficiency.

Pages 4-5, our special "Get Green" section, will tell you how to do that. While you're there, play CUB's Crossword Challenge. You might just win a month of free electricity.

I'll never forget the guy who told us he didn't consider himself a "green" person but used Compact Fluorescent Light (CFL) bulbs because he was determined to "withhold that additional money from ComEd." Exactly!

Efficiency means using less energy to do the same or more, and that's always a good deal. But it also means keeping your hard-earned cash out of the utilities' pockets.

Remember how bad it was before CUB?



Gov. Pat Quinn was a 34-year-old activist in 1983 when he pushed for statewide referendums that overwhelmingly called for the creation of CUB. Now 60, he lives in the governor's mansion and recently posed for a photo with CUB staff and board members in Springfield.

It was the spring of 1983, and Gov. "Big Jim" Thompson was in a packed theater in southern Illinois pitching a tax increase—but people were more interested in what he would do about utility bills. What he said sparked applause from 200 Belleville-area residents.

"Let's have a citizens utility board," said Thompson, virtually assuring that the CUB Act, then before the General Assembly, would become law. He

would sign it less than five months later, on Sept. 20, 1983.

It was the culmination of more than a year of hard work by CUB supporters, including one 34-year-old activist who railed against "an unprecedented series of back-breaking" utility increases.

The headlines were dark those days. Facing criticism about cost over-runs, ComEd, which boosted profits by 35 percent in 1982, had a "continuing

need for higher rates" largely fueled by nuclear plant construction, the Chicago Tribune reported. The next summer, one Sunday front page warned: "Utility rates expected to double in 3 years." There was talk of "a utility price disaster."

No wonder frustration was palpable. "Send the flunky home!" someone shouted as a utility official tried to speak at one community meeting.

In November 1982, Chicago voted 4-1 in favor of a CUB, and later 111 Illinois communities followed suit—sometimes by a pro-CUB margin of 14-1.

Such "whopping margins give us a lot of momentum to go down to the legislature," said that young activist who had complained about "back-breaking" rate hikes. He was right: By late May 1983 the House and Senate had both passed the CUB Act, setting the stage for Thompson's signing.

So who was that young activist? It was Pat Quinn, who went on to become the governor—and CUB went on to help save consumers more than \$10 billion.

CFLs, and CUB, have come a long way

Long before CUB had a "Get Green" pledge to win free Compact Fluorescent Light (CFL) bulbs, the consumer group was distributing CFLs and spreading the word about how they could cut electric bills.

But back when CUB was just a kid, compact fluorescents weren't very compact and they definitely didn't come free.

The Fall 1992 newsletter, then called the "CUB News," carried a front-page article announcing CUB's "Bright Idea" program to sell discounted CFLs.

However, the inside pages featured illustrations of dinosaur-like bulbs that don't look anything like today's five-inch curly-cue CFLs. They were so bulky (up to eight inches long) lamps needed a special "extender" to fit them, and they were so expensive that "discounted" prices ranged from \$11.50 to \$18.50 per bulb.

Compare that with today's CFLs that cost about \$1 to \$2.



Brian Ross in the 1990's

Brian Ross, CUB's director of policy and programs from 1990-93 and the instigator of that very first CFL program, traveled the state holding workshops about the bulbs. It was an uphill battle to get policy-makers to embrace energy efficiency.

"If you stood up and spoke about energy efficiency, you were thought of as a wacko," Ross recalled.

As Ross sees it, energy efficiency finally began to take hold in just the last two years, with the record-high gasoline prices. "Gas prices go up and suddenly everyone wants an energy audit for their home," he said. "It made the difference."

Now the owner of a Minneapolis consulting firm that focuses on land-use planning and energy policy, Ross was happy to hear that 17 years after his own CFL program CUB is telling everyone who will listen about energy efficiency.

Captions galore! We're not "lion," CUB members are creative



A retired school teacher won 50 money-saving light bulbs and a month of free electricity after his name was picked in a drawing of nearly 100 contestants in CUB's Silver Anniversary Cartoon Caption Contest.

"Fantastic!" said Richard Bolster, of Northbrook.

Bolster's caption, "Give me a minute to decide which," has the poor, cartoon bill-payer pondering what's worse: getting devoured by a hungry lion or paying the utility bill.

All of the captions that poured into CUB's office made us smile, but a few stood out as particularly clever:

"I'm not lyin', this utility bill scares me more than you do!"

- Sally Schroeder, Rock Island

"Beam me up, CUBBIE!"

- Darcy Gentner, Urbana

"At least he won't have to face next month's bill."

- Matthew Gruger, Chicago

"On second thought, I'd rather fight the lion."





- Bruce Swartz, Champaign

"It's CUB or the lions."

- Hans G. Schaetzke, Des Plaines.

"I think I've got a better chance against the lion. (If he only knew about CUB!)"

- Philip DeMaertelaere, Chicago

	15-watt Globe, 3.7" x 5.7" Use in place of 60-watt bulb CUB Price: \$11.50 each (Retail at \$15)
	15-watt Quad, 2.25" x 5.75" Use in place of 60-watt bulb CUB Price: \$16.50 each (Retail at \$24)
	18-watt Capsule, 3" x 7.2" Use to replace 75-watt bulb CUB Price: \$15.50 each (Retail at \$22)
	27-watt Quad, 2.1" x 7.8" Use to replace 100-watt bulb CUB Price: \$18.50 (Retail at \$26)
Starter Kit includes 15-watt Globe, 18-watt Capsule and 27-watt Quad CUB Price: \$42 (Retail \$63)	

What a deal! As this ad from 1992 shows, you could order CFLs from CUB at a "discount" of \$11.50. Now the bulbs are less than \$2...not to mention smaller.

"I knew we were laying the groundwork for something big back then," Ross said. "We were just ahead of the times."

The CUB Voice

Good job, CUB! Website, phone campaign win prestigious awards



One is silver and the other gold. CUB's website, www.CitizensUtilityBoard.org, and phone campaign have helped the consumer group make plenty of friends in Illinois—100,000 consumers have joined our ranks.

CUB's money-saving website and 2008 phone-savings campaign were awarded Golden and Silver Trumpet awards, respectively, by the Publicity Club of Chicago.

It is the second Golden Trumpet for CUB Web Master David Mroczkowski. The first came in 2006.

CUB showcased the website's money-saving tools, such as the Local Phone Cost-cutter, Cellphone Saver, Gas Market Monitor and CFL Calculator, to earn the Golden Trumpet. See what CUB has to offer at www.CitizensUtilityBoard.org.

CUB's phone-savings campaign was awarded a Silver Trumpet for spreading tips worth \$500 a year in savings, on average.

So what has CUB done in 2009?

■ Phone-bill clinics:

■ Local Phone Cost-cutter:

■ CUB Cellphone Saver:

■ CUB can help you:

www.CitizensUtilityBoard.org

1-866-688-4282

■ You can help CUB:

1-800-669-5556

www.CitizensUtilityBoard.org

Dialing up savings: CUB's guide to Internet phone service

More and more people at CUB phone clinics are talking about "Internet phone service," or VoIP—the phone service with funny names like Skype and magicJack that brags of a price that's "cheaper than cab fare."

In most cases, VoIP users can make calls with a traditional phone, but VoIP calls travel over a broadband Internet connection instead of a landline.

VoIP can offer some practical features. For example, a customer can get home phone messages e-mailed to a work computer.

The service also is known for some rock-bottom prices—but in most cases a broadband Internet connection will cost about \$20 to \$40 per month on top of the VoIP price tag. There are other minuses. If a home's power or Internet connection fails, so does your phone service.

VoIP users also must register their address to receive 911 services. Some offers, like Skype, cannot access emergency services whatsoever. VoIP users must also find an Internet-based alternative for services requiring a traditional phone line such as fax machines, TiVo, and security systems.

VoIP can be an inexpensive option if you already have a high-speed Internet connection. CUB explored the fine print of some of the most popular VoIP offers and put them into this chart. CUB's analysis is based solely on price, not service quality, which can vary by provider.

Plan	Costs	CUB's Analysis
Vonage's "Premium Unlimited" plan offers unlimited calling in the continental U.S. and to Canada, Puerto Rico, France, Italy, Spain, U.K. and Ireland.	\$24.99 a month, plus \$20-\$40 a month for broadband Internet. The \$9.95 shipping and handling fee and \$30 activation fee may be waived.	Add the cost of broadband and this is just another bloated plan that offers more calling time and more features than most people want. But there are some nice features among the 25 that are included, such as accessing voice mail via e-mail. And this could be a good deal if you frequently call Europe.
Allvoi offers 500 minutes a month for local and long-distance phone service.	\$3.99 a month for the first 6 months, then \$6.99 a month afterward, plus \$20-\$40 for broadband Internet, \$30 activation fee may be waived, \$12.95 shipping and handling.	This is the service that brags about rates cheaper than lunch or cab fare. It is cheap, but there are add-ons. For example, if you want to keep your number, there's a one-time fee, and a 50-cent monthly surcharge. There's a two-phone limit, and use of a second phone costs \$2.99 a month. Plus, don't forget the cost of broadband, which pushes the price tag to several weeks of lunches, not just one meal.
Skype's "Unlimited U.S. and Canada" plan offers unlimited calling to landlines and cell phones in the U.S. and Canada.	\$2.95 per month, plus \$20-\$40 a month for broadband Internet, \$30 a year for an online phone number, \$12-\$80 for headset.	Unlike other services here, this granddaddy of VoIP generally depends on a computer—not a traditional phone—to make calls. Low international rates, free Skype-to-Skype calling, and video calling make this a good option for those with family or friends abroad.
Comcast Digital Voice Unlimited includes unlimited local and long-distance calling to the U.S., Canada, Puerto Rico, and more.	\$44.95 a month for those who do not subscribe to Comcast cable and Internet services, \$3 equipment fee, \$29.95 activation fee.	Comcast has a broadband network so you don't have to pay extra for a high-speed Internet connection. Still, this is an expensive VoIP service—even with a \$5 monthly discount for those who also get Comcast cable and Internet. You get 12 calling features, but most people use only one or two.
magicJack offers unlimited nationwide calling.	\$40 for the device and the first year of service, \$20 a year afterward, plus \$20-\$40 a month for broadband Internet, \$7 shipping and handling.	The per year rate for unlimited calling, voice mail, and three other top calling features is the lowest we've seen. For now, magicJack customers must get a new phone number when they sign up, but the company says that will change sometime in 2009. Some people use magicJack for long distance and keep their landline with a low-cost local calling plan like the CUB-designed Consumer's Choice plans. (See below.)
Great landline alternative: Consumer's Choice Basic, Extra, or Plus AND Pioneer Telephone's Rate Buster long-distance plan.	Consumer's Choice prices range from \$3.05-\$19.85 a month. Pioneer Telephone charges less than 3 cents per minute.	Consumer's Choice plans fit the average caller's needs—and the low rates are locked in through 2011. Consumer's Choice Plus includes unlimited local calling and two features. Pioneer has a CUB-negotiated \$20 credit. Call CUB's Phone Savings Center, at 1-866-688-4282, for more information.

A \$marter You

Ditching bad energy habits can add up to big savings

Bad habit #1

Leaving devices and appliances plugged in, even when they're not in use.



Smart way to save

Everything you plug into an outlet is consuming what's called "vampire power," and it can account for up to 70 percent of a device's energy consumption. Use a power strip, or even better, a smart power strip. A smart strip automatically detects when devices are not in use and stops vampire power from being drawn out of them. It can also be customized to maintain power to devices that need a constant supply, like a DVR or a microwave with a digital clock. **Potential savings per year: \$240.**

Bad habit #2

Cranking up the air conditioner or thermostat on hot summer and cold winter days to stay comfortable.

Smart way to save

You can maintain your desired temperature using less energy. Check out these options:

- In summer, raise your thermostat a couple degrees and use a ceiling fan spinning counterclockwise to create a downward breeze. Don't have a ceiling fan? Raise your thermostat a degree or two and see if you notice a difference. In the winter, run fans clockwise to

force warm air down, and try lowering the thermostat. **Potential savings per year: \$180.**

- Increase convenience, comfort, and savings with a programmable thermostat. This device allows you to make easy, automatic adjustments to control your home's temperature. At night and when you're not home, raise or lower the temperature depending on the season. **Potential savings per year: \$180+.**



- Air leaks may be responsible for as much as 20 percent of your heating and cooling costs, or the equivalent of leaving a window open all the time—even in the winter. Use weather-stripping, caulk, and insulation to seal cracks around windows, door frames, attic eaves, and electrical outlets. **Potential savings per year: \$470.**



- Participate in your utility's central air conditioning **cycling** program. On the hottest days, when demand is high, your utility will send a wireless signal to your central air conditioner to cycle the compressor on and off. The fan stays on to cycle already conditioned air through your home. ComEd has two cycling options, offering customers monthly savings of \$5 to \$10 in the summer. Ameren's E-Smart

How to sign up:

Ameren:

Call 1-866-838-6918

ComEd:

Call 1-888-806-2273

Thermostat Program will offer a similar service, but is not yet available. **Potential savings per year: \$20+.**

Bad habit #3

Buying a brand new television and watching it at the sales-floor settings.

Smart way to save

Check your TV's brightness level. Most TVs are sold at an "overly bright" level meant for in-store display. Change your brightness setting to "standard" or "home." Also choose efficient LED screens over energy-guzzling LCD or plasma. **Potential savings per year: \$50.**

Bad habit #4

Leaving video game consoles turned on when you're not playing. How much energy could one little box use?

Smart way to save

Save your game and power down after each use. Video game systems like Sony Playstation 3 and Microsoft Xbox 360 waste energy if you leave them on when you're not playing. A Nintendo Wii uses the least amount of energy: It only costs \$3 per year to operate if you power down after each use. **Potential savings per year: \$122.**



Bad habit #5

Using screensavers to prevent "burn in," permanent shadows burned into your monitor.

Smart way to save

Manufacturers have eliminated burn in, and hypnotic as those moving neon squares are, they waste energy. Use "sleep mode" or "power management" settings instead. **Potential savings per year: \$75.**

Bad habit #6

Using warm or hot water for every load of laundry.

Smart way to save

Wash clothes in cold water to reduce the cost of operating your washing machine. Unless clothes are stained, using cold water gets them just as clean as warm water, at a fraction of the cost. **Potential savings per year: \$73.**

Other smart tips

Could it be time for a more efficient refrigerator? ComEd and Ameren will pay you \$25 to \$35 to pick up and dispose of your old refrigerator. To learn how much energy your appliances and electronics are really using, pick up a Kill-A-Watt meter. Plug the device into a power outlet and then plug the appliance you want to test into the Kill-A-Watt. A screen on the meter will show how much electricity your device consumes in kilowatt-hours and how much it costs. It can also display the volts, amps, and wattage used.



For more information:



www.CUBoard.org



www.ase.org



www.energystar.gov



www.eere.energy.gov



www.nrdc.org/energy

Big changes ahead for Illinois energy industry

ComEd seeks OK for smart grid pilot | Bill would make Illinois energy leader

A new pilot program proposed in northern Illinois would determine if "smart" upgrades to the power grid could lessen blackouts, reduce costs, and reward consumers with lower electric bills when they practice energy efficiency.

"Smart grid" refers to improvements to the electricity grid using Internet technology. Ameren and ComEd have gotten permission to investigate these upgrades, and CUB successfully fought to be included in the decision-making process.

"We're cautiously optimistic about the progress we've made in building a true smart grid in Illinois," CUB Executive Director David Kolata said. "There's a lot more work to do. The key is stopping the utilities from slapping customers with a bill without giving them big benefits."

Kolata said the goal is to build a cost-efficient smart grid to prevent "a very expensive train wreck in the future."

"The nation is using more electricity, energy prices are haywire, and the power grid is using technology that

Continued on p. 7

Illinois would become a national leader in energy efficiency, cutting electric and natural gas costs and allowing consumers to buy the latest energy-saving appliances with a low-interest loan they pay off on their utility bills, under recently approved state legislation.

Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan led the charge for SB 1918, which would create a gas efficiency portfolio standard and an on-bill financing program. Gov. Pat Quinn is expected to sign the bill into law.

"Energy efficiency is the best way to keep utility bills in check, and to avoid building expensive, polluting power plants," said CUB Board Member Bill Markel, of Sidell. "If SB 1918 programs are implemented well, Illinois consumers stand to benefit from a cleaner, more reliable, and more affordable energy future."

The portfolio standard would require gas utilities to reduce energy demand by a certain percent every year, cul-

Continued on p. 7



Where there's a "ville" there's a way. Hollowayville Mayor Tony Ponsetti, his wife Mary Beth, and grandson Hunter, display the 200 CFLs the town won as part of CUB's "Get Green" Community Giveaway. Take CUB's Get Green pledge at www.CitizensUtilityBoard.org, to help your town win in 2009.

Take CUB's "Get Green" Crossword Challenge

Fill out CUB's "Get Green" Crossword Puzzle and unscramble the circled letters to complete the mystery poem. If you get it right, you'll qualify for a drawing of 50 free Compact Fluorescent Light bulbs (CFLs) and a month of free electricity. CFLs use just a quarter of the energy of regular light bulbs and each can save up to \$50 over its lifetime.

The winner will be announced in the Fall CUB Voice.

Fill out the form and postmark your entry no later than August, 31. Mail to:

CUB's Crossword Challenge
Citizens Utility Board
309 W. Washington, Suite 800
Chicago, IL 60606

ACROSS

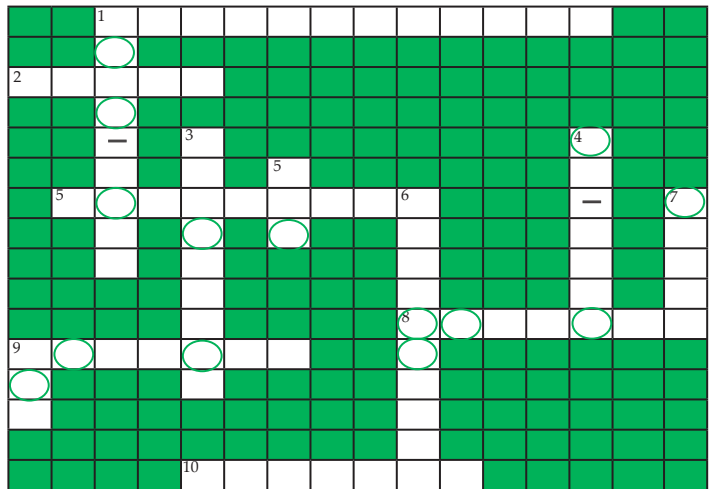
1. This greedy **guzzler** is your home's biggest energy hog.
2. CUB poetry: Mr. Edison would take heart to hear the grid was getting _____.
5. Ride this "wave" in the summer to save money and energy when you're hungry.
8. One who chugalugs beer, or an old inefficient refrigerator with a greedy appetite for energy.
9. Lance Armstrong's favorite sport, or a way consumers can save money with their air conditioners.
10. This blood-sucking power can account for up to 70 percent of an appli-

ance's energy consumption.

DOWN

1. A new way to price electricity, or that HBO show with Mr. Maher.
3. Under a new law, this waterless "port" is the standard by which natural gas companies will save consumers money.
4. Talking about President Clinton. Or a financing tool within SB 1918 that helps people buy energy-efficient appliances with no up-front costs.
5. An abbreviation for the way electricity is measured.
6. Not from Hollywood, but this "star" has a lot of fans among appliance users who like to save money on their electric bills.
7. Of electric, natural gas...and parking.
9. Not the "Canadian Football League," but a bright idea that can save you up to \$50 over its lifetime.

*Can't figure out a clue? The answers are scattered throughout the newsletter. **Look for the green words.**



Complete the mystery poem:

For 25 years CUB's saved you billions, but don't sing us a birthday tune.
Take a cue from '77 and that songbird, Debby Boone.

For old bulbs gulp our energy and rate hikes spark our strife,
but our CFLs can make you sing:

"CUB, _____ up _____!"

CUBBITZ

'Just' deserts... So how does U.S. Energy Savings Corp. handle bad PR over misleading-marketing allegations? It hides behind a new name: Just Energy. The company just reached a \$1 million settlement with the Illinois Attorney General's office. CUB also wants state regulators to boot Just Energy from Illinois if it doesn't improve. The company has a lot to prove, considering a recent encounter between a CUB staffer and Just Energy sales representatives who swore they had no connection to that other company, U.S. Energy.

Ameren angst... It's hard to explain away near-record profits to justify a \$226 million rate hike—only eight months after its last increase. But Ameren's doing its best. Too many people aren't paying their bills, says the supposedly struggling company, which made \$622 million last year. So Ameren needs to raise its utility rates because too many people can't pay the current rates? For Ameren customers, it's a bit like hearing that the beatings will continue until morale improves.

Sacked... The Bears' Brian Urlacher isn't the only Chicago linebacker getting a salary increase this year. AT&T increased the monthly charge for its very own Line-backer from \$6.99 to \$7.50 a month. Line-backer is an unnecessary, optional insurance plan that covers the phone wires inside a person's home. Inside-wire problems occur only once every 20 to 30 years, on average, making it hard to justify the \$90-a-year price tag. With his tough defense, Urlacher worked for his pay increase. But AT&T's Line-backer, which hasn't been useful since the time of rotary phones, deserves to be fired.

Raw Deal... Apple markets its new iPhone promising to put "the Internet in your pocket." That's not exactly true. An exclusive deal with AT&T prohibits customers' access to other networks and there have been alarming examples of restricted Internet use. Maybe Apple should change the iPhone's slogan to "putting you in AT&T's pocket."

A \$1 billion attack on consumers

Continued from p. 1

in this economy the utilities get the prize for horrible timing," CUB Board Representative Terryl Francis, of Glen Carbon, said. "It's maddening to think that corporations with fat profits and fat CEO salaries have their fingers in our pockets yet again."

Last year, CUB helped block more than \$200 million in higher rates—adding to the \$10 billion it has helped save consumers over the last 25 years.

This year CUB has launched its "Rate-hike Fighters Hall of Fame" campaign to beat back the new wave of rate hikes.

Slash Peoples Gas rate hike!

CUB, the Illinois Attorney General's office, the city of Chicago, and the staff of the Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC) have filed testimony showing that a proposed \$161.9 million Peoples Gas rate hike should be slashed.

CUB argued that at best Chicago-based Peoples Gas could only justify a \$48.3 million increase—70 percent off the \$161.9 million it requested. CUB also asked the ICC to cut sister company North Shore Gas' proposed \$21.9 million increase in half, to about \$10.9 million.

Those reductions could get even bigger as the case proceeds, depending on the findings of ICC staffers, who also recommended deep cuts.

The five-member ICC is expected to decide the case by early 2010.

Do they really deserve rate hikes?

2008 parent-company profits, 2008 CEO compensation, and current rate-hike plans of Illinois' utilities.

	Parent Profits	CEO Compensation	Rate-hike Watch
ComEd	\$2.9 billion (Exelon)	John Rowe, \$13 million	CUB has appealed last year's \$273 million increase. ComEd is expected to file for yet another rate hike within a year.
Ameren	\$622 million	Gary Rainwater, \$4.4 million Note: Thomas Voss is now CEO.	CUB is appealing last year's \$162 million increase, and it's fighting a new \$226 million rate-hike request.
Peoples/North Shore Gas	\$126.4 million (Integrus)	Larry Weyers, \$7.2 million Note: Charles Schrock is now CEO.	CUB has appealed a \$71 million rate hike last year and it has just proposed slashing their new \$184 million request.
Nicor Gas	\$119.5 million	Russ Strobel, \$2.5 million	CUB helped cut Nicor's \$140 million rate-hike request in half. Nicor isn't happy with the \$69 million it got, so it's appealing for more money.
AT&T	\$12.9 billion	Randall Stephenson, \$15.8 million	Company just increased its Line-Backer charge, and is constantly increasing prices of other plans and services.
Verizon	\$6.4 billion	Ivan Seidenberg, \$20.3 million	Company is constantly increasing prices of plans and services.
Illinois American Water	\$171.6 million (American Water. This excludes "goodwill impairment charge.")	Donald Correll, \$3.9 million	CUB helped cut about \$9 million off a rate hike last year, but the company still got \$27 million, and it just filed for a \$58.6 million increase.

Total rate-hike cases: \$1.04 billion!

Sources: AFL-CIO paywatch, corporate earnings reports, CUB legal department.

No more secret rate-hike meetings with ICC

Secret meetings between state regulators and utility representatives just before those companies file for rate hikes would be banned, under legislation passed in Springfield.

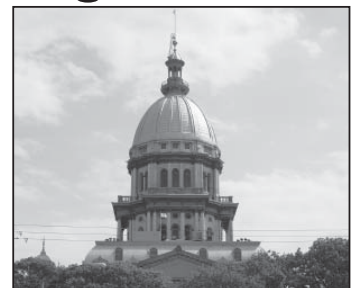
Despite headlines about legislative gridlock over taxes, CUB did help pass SB 1918, a bill that could save consumers billions of dollars through energy-efficiency provisions. (See p. 5.)

But SB 1918, expected to be signed by Gov. Pat Quinn, also would stop Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC) staff and commissioners from leaving

to lucrative utility-industry jobs for two years after they leave their posts.

In addition, SB 1918 would end the utilities' practice of using "closed-door" meetings with the ICC to advance rate-hike cases before those cases were even officially filed.

"Consumers don't have a fair shot when utilities can hold secret meetings to push rate hikes and ICC members can take the expressway to lucrative utility jobs," said CUB Board Secretary George Miller, of Melrose Park. "SB 1918 will begin to level the playing field for consumers."



Leveling the playing field. CUB helped push consumer-friendly legislation through Springfield.

The CUB Voice

Bill would bring cleaner, more affordable energy

Continued from p. 5

minating in an 8.6 percent reduction by 2020. That could save consumers \$10 billion and reduce carbon-dioxide emissions by 53.27 million tons over the next couple decades, the Midwest Energy Efficiency Alliance estimated.

The utilities would meet these targets by offering consumers incentives to invest in energy efficiency. New statewide programs will likely be available by June, 2011.

Until then, there are state-mandated incentives available for buying certain efficient products, including washers, furnaces, boilers, and insulation. Visit www.CitizensUtilityBoard.org to learn more.

The **portfolio** standard follows CUB-supported legislation in 2007 that gave electric customers more than \$1 billion in refunds and required ComEd and Ameren to reduce demand for electricity by 2 percent by 2015.

On-bill financing programs would allow residential consumers to purchase money-saving appliances without making any payments upfront. They would pay off the investment through a low-interest loan on their gas or electric bill, while at the same time benefiting from the efficient upgrade.

Energy-efficient products cost less over time than their energy-guzzling counterparts, but the higher upfront price tag prevented many people from buying them. On-bill payment programs, likely to begin in early to mid-2010, allow a much larger group of consumers to invest in efficiency. Even non-participants will benefit as reductions in demand lead to lower wholesale energy prices.

A smarter grid could help save billions

Continued from p. 5

hasn't changed much since the days of Thomas Edison," he said.

Building a better grid recently took a step in the right direction when ComEd sought approval for a pilot program that would install about 140,000 "smart" meters in Chicago and 10 suburban communities. Costing all ComEd customers about 25 cents a month, on average, or less than a gallon of milk a year, the meters would allow some customers to

choose special pricing programs that could cut their bills.

While most customers are stuck on their utility's fixed per kilowatt-hour rate, actual power prices are very cheap most of the time, except for certain summer "peak" hours. One pilot pricing program would allow customers to pay **real-time** rates and use "smart" technology to save money if they avoid heavy electricity usage when power prices are high. Another option would allow customers to choose a program

that rewards them with a rebate if they lower their usage.

Other "smart grid" benefits include detecting and immediately fixing power outages, which cost the nation an estimated \$150 billion a year, and fighting "vampire power." Electricity wasted by constantly running appliances may cost Illinois households hundreds of millions of dollars a year, but grid upgrades would allow "smart" appliances to power down automatically.

How the electric rate cut affects your power bill

Continued from p. 1

Company	New Non-Summer Energy Charge	Old Non-Summer Energy Charge	New Summer Energy Charge	Old Summer Energy Charge
ComEd	Space heat: 3.978 Non-space heat: 6.435	Space heat: 4.571 Non-space heat: 7.395	Space heat: 5.240 Non-space heat: 6.589	Space heat: 6.022 Non-space heat: 7.572
AmerenIP Note: The space heat rates are NOT applicable to new customers.	Space heat: 6.874 for first 800 kWh, then .885 Non-space heat: 6.874 for first 800 kWh, then 4.856	Space heat: 7.957 for first 800 kWh, then 1.024 Non-space heat: 7.957 for first 800 kWh, then 5.621	5.516	6.385
AmerenCILCO	7.480 for first 800 kWh, then 2.334	8.658 for first 800 kWh, then 2.702	5.525	6.395
AmerenCIPS Note: The space heat rates are NOT applicable to new customers.	Space heat: 7.484 for first 800 kWh, then 2.367 Non-space heat: 7.484 for first 800 kWh, then 5.104	Space heat: 8.663 for first 800 kWh, then 2.740 Non-space heat: 8.663 for first 800 kWh, then 2.740	5.554	6.429
AmerenCIPS-Metro East Note: These are former AmerenUE customers.	7.386 for first 800 kWh, then .992	8.549 for first 800 kWh, then 1.148	5.554	6.429

fi

President

Vice President

Secretary

Treasurer

Executive Director
Policy Director

Associate Director
Assistant Consumer Rights Counselor

Communications Director;
Attorney;
Communications Assistant

Operations Director
Environmental Outreach Coordinator;
Environmental Programs Coordinator;

Outreach Director
Network Administrator
Phone-bill Analyst

Litigation Director

Outreach Coordinator
Bilingual Consumer Rights Counselor;
Website Administrator

Paralegal/Outreach Assistan
Phone-bill Analyst;

Senior Consumer Rights Counselor
Operations Assistant;

Phone-bill Analyst;
Bilingual Consumer Rights Counselor

Senior Policy Analyst/Government Liaison;

Database and

CUB VOICE



Nonprofit. Org.
U.S. Postage
Paid
Permit No. 6775
Chicago, IL

"Get Green" Issue 2009



Printed on recycled paper

A tribute to CUB member Robert Kramer A lifetime fighting for CUB

Whenever he got the chance, Robert Kramer, a tough, self-made businessman who had battled Ma Bell through the company he founded, told his friends to support CUB.

And he's not letting death stop him from continuing that mission.

The 75-year-old Kramer, of suburban Chicago, died in May of complications from years of health issues including open-heart surgery and a few bouts with cancer. When it came time to decide what organization mourners should support in lieu of flowers, Kramer's oldest son, Steve, spoke up: Give the money to CUB.

"He was big on (the idea) that everyone should pay fair rates, and you were the guys on the front lines doing battle," Steve said. "He liked you guys to the extent that on a yearly basis he would always ask me, 'You support them, Steven, right?'"

CUB has already received several contributions in Kramer's memory,

When the Kramer family needed a fitting tribute for their dad, they turned to CUB.

including two \$100 gifts.

"He'd be happy to hear that people were making donations in his name for such a worthy cause," his widow, Carol said. "There's nobody else fighting for the little guy."

Supporting a tough consumer group seems a fitting tribute to Kramer, who had a plaque that said: "Tact...the ability to tell a man to go to hell and make him feel happy to be on his way."

He was tough alright, Carol said, but she also remembered the guy who for years managed the sound system for Evanston's July 4th fireworks, loved to visit National Parks, and snapped photos of deer in the backyard. "He was always my friend," she said.

Kramer built his first TV when he

was 13 and started a TV repair service before he even graduated from high school. That eventually blossomed into Kraden Electronics, which grew into a telecommunications equipment firm that competed with AT&T.

Going head-to-head with Ma Bell gave him his fill of the phone company. So whenever friendly conversation turned to grumbling about phone, electric, or gas rates, Carol remembered her husband saying: "If you want to do something about it, join CUB."

Carol and her son hope Kramer's legacy sparks more contributions.

"I see the rebates and the rollbacks. If people were to give one-tenth of one percent of what they get from you each year, you guys would be off to the races," Steve said.

In addition to Carol and Steve (Angela), Kramer is survived by two other sons, Dave (Elizabeth) and Dan; three grandchildren, Christopher, Jessica, and Emily; and a sister, Eileen.



Robert Kramer