



# CITIZENS UTILITY BOARD

## Fighting for Illinois Consumers

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### **CELEBRATING 35 YEARS, CUB RELEASES SUMMER UTILITY TIPS LIST**

In honor of its 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the Citizens Utility Board (CUB) has released a list of “Dos and Don’ts”—summer tips to help Illinois consumers avoid pitfalls that make their utility bills skyrocket.

“It’s been an honor to serve Illinois consumers for the last 35 years,” CUB Executive Director David Kolata said. “For a consumer advocacy group that has helped save Illinois utility customers more than \$20 billion, there’s no better way to celebrate an anniversary than to give people tips on how to save money this summer.”

After a series of local referendums showed overwhelming support for the creation of an advocate for utility customers, the Illinois General Assembly created CUB in 1983. The CUB Act gave the nonprofit, nonpartisan group the mission to fight for the rights of utility customers across Illinois.

At the Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC), CUB challenges rate hikes proposed by Illinois’ major gas, electric and water utilities; in Springfield it advocates for legislation that promotes affordable clean energy; and across Illinois it staffs events to help educate consumers about energy efficiency and other ways they can cut their utility bills. The consumer group also has released free guides on fighting robocalls and how to cut smartphone data waste. In recent years, CUB has ramped up advocacy on national issues also, including advocating for better Congressional protections from robocall scams.

Since opening its doors in 1984, CUB has helped save Illinois consumers more than \$20 billion—a figure confirmed by the ICC—by fighting rate hikes, winning rate cuts and refunds, and advocating for individual consumers. The consumer group includes an outreach team that staffs up to 500 events a year and a consumer advocacy team that handles thousands of complaints and questions from utility customers who call the Consumer Hotline, at **1-800-669-5556**.

As part of its 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Clean Bill Campaign, CUB has released a summer “Dos and Don’ts” list for utility customers:

**DON’T**...fall for electric rip-offs. This summer, alternative suppliers going door-to-door, telemarketing you or mailing you pitches may try to lure you into a bad deal. ComEd’s power price (**6.725 cents per kilowatt-hour**) and Ameren Illinois’ rate (**4.561 cents per kilowatt-hour**) from June through September are both **LOWER** than last summer. Beware: The Illinois Attorney General’s Office says consumers with alternative electric suppliers have overpaid by more than \$600 million since 2015.

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**DO...**practice energy efficiency. It's saved consumers more than \$4 billion since 2008. Thanks to good legislation like the Future Energy Jobs Act, utilities now offer a rich menu of programs that help you save energy and money. You may think you have to start big by replacing windows, but you don't. You might get a bigger bang for your buck by simply buying discounted LED bulbs, sealing cracks and leaks around your windows, or adding insulation in the attic.

**DON'T...**engage with robocallers. Illinoisans were hit with an estimated 1.8 billion robocalls last year, and many were scams. So if you receive a marketing robocall, just hang up. Beware of the "say yes" scam, which tricks callers into saying "yes" to OK unauthorized credit card charges. Even if a robocall instructs you to press a number to stop future calls, don't do it. That could be a trick to confirm your number is active and ripe for more calls. Get CUB's free guide to fighting robocalls at **CitizensUtilityBoard.org**.

**DO...**learn about real-time pricing. Both Ameren and ComEd offer these programs, which charge you a market rate that can change by the hour. Savings aren't guaranteed, but participants have saved an average of 10-15 percent on the supply side of their electric bills. Explore whether Ameren's Power Smart Pricing (1-877-655-6028) or ComEd's Hourly Pricing (1-888-202-7787) program is right for you.

**DON'T...**fall prey to the utility imposter scam. Across Illinois, scam artists are impersonating utility workers to take consumers' money. Real utility workers will never ask you to buy a prepaid card to avoid disconnection. If you question whether the person on the phone or at your door is a utility worker, hang up or close the door, call your utility (using the number on your bill) to check, and to verify your account status.

Illinois consumers with questions, concerns or complaints about utility service or rates should call CUB's Consumer Hotline, **1-800-669-5556**, or visit **CitizensUtilityBoard.org**.

CUB is celebrating its 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary as Illinois' leading nonprofit utility watchdog. Created by the Illinois Legislature, CUB opened its doors in 1984 to represent the interests of residential and small-business utility customers. Since then, it has saved consumers more than \$20 billion by helping to block rate hikes and secure refunds. For more information, call CUB's Consumer Hotline, 1-800-669-5556, or visit its award-winning website, [www.CitizensUtilityBoard.org](http://www.CitizensUtilityBoard.org).

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