



# CITIZENS UTILITY BOARD

Fighting for Illinois Consumers

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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## CUB RESPONDS TO DISTORTIONS IN WBEZ-FM REPORT

*On Monday, WBEZ-FM published a piece that perpetuated numerous misconceptions and included misstatements about the Citizens Utility Board (CUB). To set the record straight, CUB Executive Director David Kolata issued the following statement:*

The distortions in the WBEZ story closely parallel fictions that have been aggressively spread by fossil fuel interests and others who oppose affordable clean energy in Illinois.

The facts of CUB's record tell a much different story than was reported by WBEZ. CUB's advocacy has saved consumers more than \$20 billion over the years, and Illinois has gone from having some of the nation's highest electricity bills to the lowest average bills in the Midwest and seventh lowest in the country.

CUB would not be able to save these huge sums for customers without holding the state's biggest power companies—ComEd and Ameren—accountable. In the last 10 years, we have opposed every piece of utility-supported legislation, with one exception. In that instance, the Future Energy Jobs Act (FEJA) only gained our support after negotiations ensured significant consumer savings through wise investments in efficiency and clean, renewable energy.

We championed FEJA because it provided the fastest and cheapest route to combat climate change while curbing costs for consumers. The bipartisan bill was supported by hundreds of groups across the state, as well as by Gov. Bruce Rauner, the Republican who signed the legislation, and by Gov. J.B. Pritzker, the Democrat who succeeded him. Even many of those who initially opposed the bill now support the law.

In light of FEJA's success, the few who still oppose it are left with little option other than to resort to smear tactics, rather than to argue their position on the merits.

CUB is also proud of how we have converted Illinois Science and Energy Innovation Foundation (ISEIF) grants into quantifiable savings for consumers. With ISEIF support, CUB has held about 500 free events a year where we provide one-on-one advice to thousands of consumers on how we can lower their electricity bills.

ISEIF was created by the Illinois Legislature specifically because utilities weren't trusted to adequately educate the public about the money-saving programs they're required to offer. So lawmakers sought to ensure public-interest organizations performed this service, and they established ISEIF and the independent structure responsible for funding it. ISEIF grants are awarded through a selection process that is vetted by an independent and unpaid peer review community. This process is neither controlled nor influenced by the utilities. Those who argue that these grants are the same as direct donations from ComEd or Ameren are either grossly misinformed or willfully indifferent to the factual record.

CUB will continue to hold utilities accountable as we always have. We support the Clean Energy Jobs Act (CEJA), proposed legislation that includes strong utility accountability measures and moves Illinois

*-more-*

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to 100 percent clean energy without hiking taxes, raising electricity bills or giving a bailout to Exelon or fossil fuel companies. And in reaction to the ComEd bribery scandal, CUB has retained former Gov. Pat Quinn and the consumer-rights law firm Edelson PC to represent it in its efforts to win compensation for consumers.

Meanwhile, we will fiercely oppose any blank check for Exelon or any utility or generator. Exelon must open its books, and the state should consider all alternatives to reaching 100 percent clean energy while minimizing costs for consumers.

What Illinois cannot do, however, is allow interests that benefit from higher electricity bills and dirtier energy to create controversy to the detriment of consumers – either by seeking to discredit CUB or by attempting to derail future legislation on electricity policy that is in the public interest.

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*CUB is 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 block rate hikes, secure refunds, and fight for clean, low-cost energy. For more information, call CUB's Consumer Hotline, 1-800-669-5556, or visit its website, [www.CitizensUtilityBoard.org](http://www.CitizensUtilityBoard.org).*