



CITIZENS UTILITY BOARD

Fighting for Illinois Consumers

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
Thursday, July 29, 2021

CONTACT: Jim Chilsen
(o) 312-263-4282, (c) 312-513-1784

Citizens Utility Board challenges ICC's approval of Nicor's "trash gas" program

The Citizens Utility Board (CUB) is pushing back on a \$16 million Nicor Gas pilot program that would charge consumers to connect its system to so-called "renewable natural gas" sources, such as landfills. The Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC) recently approved Nicor Gas' proposal, but the consumer watchdog is challenging the body's decision.

Renewable natural gas — also called "trash gas" — is methane captured from garbage dumps, agriculture and food-waste operations. Nicor Gas wants to capture such emissions and use them as an alternative heating option for its customers. Nicor's pilot program would charge ratepayers up to \$16 million to finance the hookup of renewable gas facilities to the utility's system.

Consumer advocates, including CUB, environmental groups, the judge who oversaw the proceeding and ICC staff recommended rejecting the proposal, citing concerns over the cost to consumers and the lack of demonstrated benefits.

Despite that opposition, the ICC reversed the judge's ruling to approve Nicor's request on July 8. CUB filed a "petition for rehearing" challenging the ruling on July 29.

"Renewable natural gas may have a place in the transition to clean energy, but we have concerns about the costs for consumers," CUB General Counsel Julie Soderna said. "Nicor's pilot program is just a subsidy to renewable natural gas producers to 'test' what is largely already known about renewable natural gas, and is therefore not a prudent use of ratepayer money."

Aside from the program cost, the long-term future of natural gas for heating is uncertain as the nation moves to end its dependence on fossil fuels. Approving this program would give utilities justification to raise consumer costs and make expensive investments for a resource that will one day be necessarily obsolete because of climate change, CUB and other advocates argue.

The ICC has 20 days to rule on CUB's petition for rehearing.

*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.*

###