



CITIZENS UTILITY BOARD

Fighting for Illinois Consumers

For Immediate Release

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CUB ALERTS CONSUMERS TO ONLINE HELP CENTER, AS HIGH HEATING PRICES, AGGRESSIVE UTILITY SPENDING SEND GAS BILLS SKYROCKETING

Frigid weather and skyrocketing heating bills hit Illinois consumers in January, sparked by aggressive utility spending and natural gas prices that are at their highest winter levels in more than a decade.

CUB alerted consumers to a free online resource, [CUBHelpCenter.com](https://www.cubhelpcenter.com). It explains why gas prices are high, offers safety and efficiency tips, outlines a customer's rights against disconnection and arms people with information about energy assistance.

While prices are lower than they were in December for Nicor Gas, North Shore Gas and Peoples Gas, January's prices are still significantly elevated and are the highest since the winter of 2008-09:

- Ameren Illinois – 70.539¢ per therm (up about 88 percent from last January)
- MidAmerican – 97.88¢ per therm (up about 206 percent from last January)
- Nicor Gas – 61.00¢ per therm (up about 110 percent from last January)
- North Shore Gas – 55.82¢ per therm (up about 41 percent from last January)
- Peoples Gas – 55.46¢ per therm (up about 92 percent from last January)

“This is the eleventh straight month of high prices, and that’s a hardship for a lot of people,” CUB Executive Director David Kolata said. “We hope the prices come down in months to come, but in the meantime, CUB urges Illinois consumers to stay safe and warm by following smart energy efficiency practices, and to call their utility if they’re having trouble affording their bills.”

The high prices are connected, in part, to climate change. Record cold temperatures froze gas wellheads and pipelines last February, causing elevated prices. Less gas exploration and increased gas demand and exports have also been factors.

Under law, gas utilities are not allowed to profit off supply prices—they pass those costs from gas producers and marketers onto customers with no markup. However, state regulators annually review the utilities' gas-management procedures to see if the companies did everything they could to procure gas efficiently to hold down costs for consumers as much as possible.

While utilities don't profit off supply prices, they do profit off delivery charges—what they charge to deliver gas to homes. Kolata said aggressive utility spending and increases to those delivery charges also are to blame for high winter bills. In 2021, Ameren received a \$76 million gas delivery rate increase and Nicor a \$240 million increase—the highest gas hike in Illinois history. CUB is concerned Peoples Gas will request an increase this year.

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CUB is fighting in Springfield to eliminate the “Qualified Infrastructure Plant” surcharge on Ameren, Nicor and Peoples Gas bills. It allows those utilities to circumvent the traditional regulatory process and rake in revenue more quickly. This charge has led to rapidly rising heating bills across Illinois. For example, consumers were first told it would only cost about \$13 a year on average for Peoples Gas customers. In the fall of 2021, those customers were paying about \$13 a month—on track for \$150 a year.

CUB invited consumers to call their legislators and let them know if they’re concerned about the high natural gas bills.

CUB is Illinois’ leading nonprofit utility watchdog group. Created by the Illinois Legislature, CUB opened its doors in 1984 to represent the interests of residential and small-business utility customers. Since then, CUB has saved consumers more than \$20 billion by helping to block rate hikes and secure refunds. For more information, call CUB’s Consumer Hotline at 1-800-669-5556 or visit CUB’s award-winning website, www.CitizensUtilityBoard.org.

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