



CITIZENS UTILITY BOARD

Fighting for Illinois Consumers

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In Another Month of High Gas Prices, CUB Alerts Consumers to New Protections

The Citizens Utility Board (CUB) on Tuesday urged people struggling to pay their heating bills to contact their utility to find out what protections and relief are available, as natural gas prices continued to soar.

The price spike coupled with aggressive spending by gas utilities have caused many consumers to pay hundreds of dollars more to heat their homes—marking the most expensive winter since 2008-2009. CUB has opened CUBHelpCenter.com to give consumers helpful information about the high bills.

For more than a year now, gas supply prices have been [elevated](#), the latest in a string of periodic price spikes in the fossil fuel industry. A CUB analysis found that major gas utilities in Illinois have been charging supply prices that were 60 percent to 159 percent higher than the previous year.

But the high supply prices are only part of the story. In Illinois, overly aggressive spending and [rampant rate hikes](#) have contributed to skyrocketing gas bills. CUB is working to eliminate the “[Qualified Infrastructure Plant](#)” surcharge, which allows gas utilities to sidestep the traditional regulatory process and rake in revenue more quickly, leading to rapidly rising bills.

"This has been an awful winter, but there are new protections available to help utility customers avoid shut off, and there's energy assistance available for families in need," CUB Executive Director David Kolata said. "If you're struggling to afford your bills, please call your utility to find out what you can do to avoid getting disconnected—it can be a difficult process to get your heat and power turned back on."

There are resources available for consumers to get help:

- **Financial Assistance for consumers struggling to pay their gas and electric bills.** The state of Illinois is encouraging those in need to apply for more than \$100 million in energy assistance by May 31. Visit the HelpIllinoisFamilies.com or call **1-833-711-0374** to learn more.
- **Temporary protections to keep gas and electric customers connected.** Consumer advocates, state regulators and utilities recently negotiated new protections for people struggling to pay their bills as certain winter disconnection moratoriums ended. Utilities are offering payment plans to help people pay off debt and protections for some lower-income customers to avoid disconnection until July 31.

For more information, [CUB's Help Center](#) offers safety and efficiency tips, outlines a customer's rights against disconnection and connects customers with energy assistance information.

About Citizens Utility Board

*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.*

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