



CITIZENS UTILITY BOARD

Fighting for Illinois Consumers

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CUB APPLAUDS REGULATORS FOR REJECTING PEOPLES GAS "THEATRICALS," AS ICC OPPOSES LATEST BID TO ADDITIONAL RATE HIKE

The Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC) Thursday unanimously derailed a request by Peoples Gas to claw back \$134 million of disallowed funding for its pipeline-replacement program in 2024. If approved, the motion would have added about \$8 million to the record \$300 million rate hike the utility received last month. Peoples Gas executives threatened to eliminate jobs and jeopardize public safety if regulators didn't acquiesce. In response the ICC's decision, the Citizens Utility Board (CUB) issued the following statement:

Less than three weeks after receiving a record rate hike, Peoples Gas tried to bully the ICC into raising costs, yet again, for the utility's beleaguered customers by manufacturing a fictitious emergency. We're grateful that regulators saw through these blatant theatrics and protected Chicago consumers, who have been buffeted by spiraling heating bills, from another money grab by the utility.

Peoples Gas has reaped record profits for six straight years – and that was before it obtained its record rate hike last month. No company that has amassed such a staggering fortune should ever threaten to neglect public safety and lay off workers. If Peoples continues to put jobs in jeopardy as a form of political extortion, the unions that represent the utility's employees should put the blame where it belongs – on Peoples Gas, not on the state regulators entrusted with holding the company accountable.

For the past decade, Chicago families have been suffering through a heating affordability crisis, as Peoples Gas bills skyrocketed to pay for the company's bloated pipe-replacement program. Peoples Gas customers pay an average of \$50 in fixed monthly costs before they ever turn on the heat or the stove. Nearly 200,000 households have been assessed a late fee, and 160,000 families have fallen behind on payments by more than 30 days.

Given all this financial woe, the ICC did the right thing when it put a moratorium on discretionary, non-emergency pipe-replacement, pending further investigation. Nonetheless, Peoples Gas responded by trying to hold its workers and public safety hostage as a ploy to coerce another rate hike out of financially burdened customers. We urge regulators, lawmakers, and the public at large to continue to stand strong and resist cynical attempts to pit the utility's workers against its customers when it is obvious that both are being made victims of the company's greed.

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The Citizens Utility Board (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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