



CITIZENS UTILITY BOARD

Fighting for Illinois Consumers

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Marking 40 Years of Consumer Advocacy and \$20 Billion in Savings, CUB Plans Year of Events To Help Illinois Consumers Protect Themselves Against Biggest Threats to Utility Bills In 2024

CUB's 40th Anniversary Utility Bill Education Tour Will Provide Money-Saving Tips Across Illinois

The Citizens Utility Board (CUB), a consumer group that has helped save Illinois utility customers more than \$20 billion, is marking its 40th anniversary by traveling the state to give consumers money-saving tips and warn people about the worst threats to their utility bills in 2024.

CUB's 40th Anniversary Utility Bill Education Tour will feature at least 300 free, online or in-person events designed to help people better understand their utility bills and how to reduce them. This will include staffing tables and handing out helpful money-saving tips at community events; holding webinars and in-person speaking engagements on saving energy, reducing robocalls and cutting TV costs; and analyzing electric, gas and phone bills at the consumer group's popular utility-bill clinics.

"We are honored to have served Illinois residents for the last 40 years," CUB Executive Director Sarah Moskowitz said. "For a consumer advocacy group that has helped save utility customers more than \$20 billion, there's no better way to celebrate an anniversary than to travel this beautiful state and give people helpful tips on how to lower their utility bills."

The Illinois General Assembly created CUB in 1983. The CUB Act gave the nonprofit, nonpartisan group the mission to fight for the rights of utility customers across Illinois—and since opening its doors in 1984, CUB has helped save Illinois consumers more than \$20 billion by fighting rate hikes, winning rate cuts and refunds, and advocating for individual consumers.

CUB challenges rate increases proposed by the major gas, electric and water utilities; in Springfield it advocates for legislation that promotes consumer protections and affordable clean energy; and across Illinois it staffs hundreds of events to help educate consumers about energy efficiency and other ways they can cut their utility bills. Based on its experience combatting high utility costs over four decades, CUB released a list of the top threats to Illinois utility bills in 2024:

Rate-hike-hungry utilities. Major electric and gas utilities—ComEd, Ameren, Nicor, Peoples and North Shore Gas—pushed for a record \$2.9 billion in rate-hike requests in 2023. CUB and other consumer advocates helped cut those requests by about \$1.6 billion, but rampant spending by the utilities has been a major problem for Illinois consumers over the last decade.

Bad alternative supplier deals. Many Illinois consumers are allowed to choose a company other than their utility to supply them with electricity or gas, but the market is littered with rip-offs. Illinois electricity customers have lost \$1.6 billion to alternative suppliers since 2015. The utility, or a community solar offer, is likely your best choice.

Inefficient homes. The federal Department of Energy says 10-20 percent of annual energy bills could be wasted because of drafts, air leaks and outdated heating and cooling systems. Taking advantage of no- or low-cost energy efficiency programs offered by your utility can help you make efficiency upgrades to your home and save hundreds of dollars a year.

Illegal Robocalls (and other scams). Illinois is a top target for scam artists. In December, the state was bombarded with an estimated 147 million robocalls, about 21 percent of which were scams, according to YouMail, a robocall-blocking firm. In 2022, Illinois ranked fifth in the number of victims (14,786) of Internet-related crime and seventh in losses, at \$266.7 million, according to the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Bloated cable packages. Many people are still loyal to their traditional cable company, but on average they only watch a few channels while paying upwards of \$100 a month for the service.

Volatile energy markets. In recent winters, Illinois consumers have been slammed by skyrocketing gas prices. Prices are lower this winter, but it's only a matter of time before they spike again. CUB is looking forward to participating in "future of gas" proceedings to plan for the long transition to safer and more affordable ways to heat our homes.

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CUB has a number of free resources, at **CitizensUtilityBoard.org**, to help Illinois consumers fight these threats to their electric, gas and telecom bills, including:

- A free library of digital fact sheets and guides on a wide range of utility-related issues—including its updated Gas and Electric guide, a solar guide, a “Better Heat” guide to help people lower their heating bills, a guide to cutting TV costs and a guide to help people protect their privacy online.
- A robust calendar of online and in-person events CUB staffs across the state. People who can’t attend an event but would like to get their utility bills analyzed can reach out to CUB at ubc@CitizensUtilityBoard.org.
- A Consumer Hotline for Illinois consumers who have questions, concerns or complaints about utility service or rates and are getting nowhere with their utility companies: call **1-800-669-5556** or visit **CitizensUtilityBoard.org** to file an inquiry online.

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The Citizens Utility Board (CUB) is celebrating its 40th anniversary as 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 website, www.CitizensUtilityBoard.org.