



**PEOPLE FOR
COMMUNITY
RECOVERY**



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**CONSUMER AND GRASSROOTS GROUPS LAUNCH MAJOR TV AD CAMPAIGN
URGING PUBLIC TO OPPOSE RECORD-BREAKING PEOPLES GAS RATE HIKES**

*ROBUST BROADCAST BUY IN CHICAGO AND SPRINGFIELD DEFENDS CONSUMERS FROM
PEOPLES GAS SCHEME TO PAD RECORD PROFITS WITH SERIAL RATE HIKES OVER NEXT
15 YEARS*

With Chicago families already ailing from a decade of spiraling heating bills, an alliance of consumer and public-interest groups Wednesday launched a major advertising blitz aimed at thwarting a threat by Peoples Gas that would usher in an onslaught of record-breaking rate hikes over the next 15 years.

The nearly \$1 million campaign, combining a hefty volume of [broadcast television spots](#) and digital ads, is sponsored by the Utility Information Alliance (UIA) and backed by the Citizens Utility Board (CUB), Faith in Place Action Fund, the Illinois Clean Jobs Coalition (ICJC), People for Community Recovery, and Sierra Club Illinois Chapter. It comes as Peoples Gas seeks Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC) approval of a plan to complete the utility's controversial pipe-replacement program – a bid that would cost consumers nearly \$13 billion and subject them to recurring waves of rate hikes that would each surpass the record-setting increase the company instituted just last year, according to a [recently released study by CUB](#) and energy industry research firm Groundwork Data.

That report also found that Peoples customers would be forced to pay off the costs of the utility's proposed spending spree on pipe-replacement for the next 75 years.

The 30-second TV commercial, which denounces Peoples' proposal as a "boondoggle," and urges Peoples customers to voice their opposition to the ICC, will air in the Chicago and Springfield markets on all major broadcast networks starting January 22nd. The ad begins: "Peoples Gas. They keep pushing to raise your utility bills to pay for their \$13 billion boondoggle. And if they win, it'll be like giving them a blank check. Your heating bills could double."

The ad continues to lay out how consumers will face rate increase after rate increase, stating: “Customers could face yearly price hikes through the year 2040. All while they keep making record profits.” The 30-second spot closes with a call to action “The ICC has already stopped them once, so speak up and tell the ICC to shut down these unfair rate hikes again.”

“For the groups sponsoring the ads, the scale of this campaign is unprecedented, but so is the magnitude of the threat looming over Peoples Gas customers,” said CUB Executive Director Sarah Moskowitz. “We thank the ICC for launching an investigation into the pipe-replacement program, and we urgently need regulators to hold Peoples’ spending in check, because otherwise the results would be catastrophic for consumers.”

Funding for the ads was provided by UIA, a charitable non-profit organization founded in 2023 to drive innovation and excellence across the utility sector, increase utilities’ accountability to the public they serve, and ensure they affordably meet their community’s current and future needs.

The ads debut one week after ratepayer advocates delivered to the ICC 5,000 public comments urging reform of Peoples’ ongoing effort to overhaul its entire network of underground pipes. Known as the System Modernization Program (SMP), the project has been plagued by controversy since its inception, incurring criticism from independent auditors for endemic cost overruns and mismanagement. And while the program has bloated costs for consumers, it has led to a massive financial windfall for Peoples. The company has raked in record profits repeatedly over the past decade, and it is expected to post more record profits following the massive \$300 million rate hike that it began billing consumers last January.

This troubling history formed the backdrop for the ICC’s landmark decision in November 2023 that barred Peoples from further investment in the SMP, pending a comprehensive investigation into the program by state regulators. During that review, Peoples submitted its current proposal to finish pipe-replacement, and the utility recently told Chicago media that consumers could expect to see the first resulting rate hike materialize next year, consistent with findings in the CUB report. The ICC is expected to rule on the future scope of the SMP next month

Meanwhile, Chicago families continue to descend [deeper into financial straits](#) due the SMP spending that had already been authorized in previous years. The average fixed monthly fee assessed on Peoples customers — representing the built-in cost of service before they actually consume any gas — is about \$30 a month.

The resulting affordability crisis has disproportionately harmed Black and Brown communities. In some of those neighborhoods, nearly half of all Peoples Gas customers have fallen behind on payments to Peoples Gas, and collectively, the company’s customers owed it more than \$57 million in debt, according to disclosures the utility submitted to the ICC on November 30th.