



CITIZENS UTILITY BOARD

Fighting for Illinois Consumers

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HEADING INTO 2026, CUB NAMES BIGGEST THREATS TO UTILITY BILLS

Based on its experience combatting high utility costs over the past year, the consumer watchdog Citizens Utility Board (CUB) of Illinois on Friday issued its list of what looks to be major threats to utility affordability in 2026.

“As consumers struggle with high prices across the board for everyday necessities like groceries and health care, escalating utility costs just make their lives more difficult,” CUB Executive Director Sarah Moskowitz said. “We think it’s important to identify the biggest culprits for rising energy bills, so consumers can be empowered to work for solutions.”

Runaway Data Center Energy Demand. Unprecedented energy demand connected to data centers was the primary cause of a 45-50 percent spike in electricity prices for Commonwealth Edison and Ameren Illinois customers in the summer of 2025. Elevated prices will remain a problem in 2026, and customers face even higher bills and rolling blackouts in the years to come if decisive action isn’t taken in Springfield and at PJM Interconnection, the power grid operator for northern Illinois and all or part of a dozen other states. [CUB has written about state and regional reforms that could rein in data centers.](#)

Rate-hike-hungry utilities. Major electric and gas utilities—ComEd, Ameren Illinois, Nicor Gas, Peoples Gas and North Shore Gas—have pushed for billions of dollars in rate hikes on the “delivery” section of bills in recent years. Under utility regulation, gas and electric companies earn a return on their infrastructure investments, incentivizing them to spend aggressively and push for rate hikes. The current Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC) has shown more sensitivity toward customer affordability in recent years, and consumer advocates have helped slash rate-hike requests significantly. But for far too many customers, any rate hike is difficult.

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 bad deals. For example, [CUB’s review of state data in 2025](#) found that Illinois electricity customers have lost more than \$2.1 billion to alternative suppliers over the last 10 years. The utility’s supply price is likely your best bet. Also, consider a [community solar](#) offer.

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Volatile energy markets. After a period of relative stability, Illinois consumers have been hit by skyrocketing gas prices in recent years. Analysts have predicted that prices could grow more volatile as increasing volumes of fuel are exported through liquefied natural gas facilities. In December, eight of Illinois' nine utilities are charging supply prices that are higher than last December, by a range of 10 percent to 63 percent, [according to a CUB review](#).

Escalating water bills. Illinois American and Aqua Illinois—the state's two biggest private water utilities—have spent more than \$411 million buying up public water systems since 2013. And under state law, they can charge customers for 100 percent of those acquisition costs. CUB is working for a legislative reform that would require shareholders, and not everyday consumers, to shoulder the majority of those costs. Learn more about this issue at [CUBWaterTracker.com](#). (Note: The parent companies of Aqua and Illinois American [have announced plans to merge](#).)

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. Learn more at [CUB's Clean Energy page](#).

“Customers may feel helpless, but there is strength in numbers,” Moskowitz said. “CUB and Illinois utility customers have worked together to achieve more than \$20 billion in savings over our 41-year history by challenging rate hikes and securing refunds.”

Please...

- Visit [CitizensUtilityBoard.org](#) to browse CUB's free digital library filled with tips on how to cut utility bills, and to take action urging decision makers to support policies that lower costs for utility customers.
- Attend a CUB event in your community. We staffed more than 220 free events across Illinois in 2025, giving consumers money-saving tips about their utility bills.
- Call CUB's Consumer Hotline, at **1-800-669-5556**, if you ever have a concern or complaint about your utility bills, and you've gotten nowhere by calling your utility.

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For more than 40 years the Citizens Utility Board (CUB) has been 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](#).

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