



**CITIZENS UTILITY BOARD**  
Fighting for Illinois Consumers



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**CONTACT:** Jim Chilsen  
(o) 312-263-4282, (c) 312-513-1784

**CONSUMER ALERT: ILLINOIS UTILITY BILLS COVER MILLIONS IN HIDDEN EXPENSES THAT ADVANCE THE UTILITIES' AGENDAS, BUT HAVE ZERO CONSUMER BENEFIT**

*Advocates deliver thousands of petitions in favor of commonsense reform legislation: "Utility Transparency Act" would bar electric, gas and water utilities from burdening customers with a long list of profligate spending. Three other states have passed similar reforms in recent years.*

Many Illinois consumers have no idea that their electric, gas and water bills cover tens of millions of dollars in self-serving utility expenses that have zero consumer benefit, but advance the agendas of Illinois utilities and increase their political power, consumer advocates warned Wednesday, while delivering thousands of petitions to legislators in support of reforms.

In a State Capitol News conference, consumer groups Citizens Utility Board (CUB), 350 Chicago and AARP Illinois provided consumers with information about these hidden expenses, which include goodwill advertising and bankrolling high-priced legal teams working to win rate hikes against consumers. Specifically, the groups are advocating for House Bill 4781/Senate Bill 3497, the Utility Transparency Act, sponsored by state Sen. Suzy Glowiak Hilton and state Rep. Theresa Mah. Connecticut, Colorado and Maine have passed similar reforms in recent years.

A CUB analysis of documents filed in utility rate-hike cases from 2023 to 2025 found that the legislation could, for the average year, save ratepayers across Illinois \$40 million.

"Constituents across the state are facing record-high utility prices, a situation that is made worse when companies pass costs that should be borne by shareholders onto customers' monthly bills," Rep. Mah said. "Illinois can and must take a strong stand and lower utility costs. This bill achieves just that."

"Working families should not foot the bill for utility companies' advertising and legal fees," Sen. Glowiak Hilton said. "At a time when energy prices are soaring, we have to work to lower costs and hold utilities accountable."

Under current state law, utilities are allowed to recover certain expenses from their customers that consumer advocates have long argued should instead be paid for by shareholders. Under the Utility Affordability Act, investor-owned electric, gas and water utilities in Illinois would be prohibited from charging customers for the following expenses:

- Utility dues for memberships in trade associations that push the companies' agenda.
- Goodwill advertising that enhances the utility image and benefits shareholders.
- Insurance protection for shareholders.
- Lawyer and expert witness costs when utilities push for rate hikes before the Illinois Commerce

Commission (ICC). Consumers are always surprised to hear that their bills fund the legal cases that raise those very bills. Typically, such legal expenses take up the largest chunk of these recoverable costs.

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Supporters say the Transparency Act does not prevent utilities from spending money on these items—it only prohibits the companies from charging customers for them. Holding utilities more accountable for their spending and helping to reduce utility bills has become a major issue in recent years, as consumers struggle with an affordability crisis—not only for what we pay to heat and light our homes, but also a number of other necessities, such as groceries, medicine and rent.

“Amid an affordability crisis, it is unacceptable for everyday utility customers to be covering these self-serving utility costs that just make utilities more powerful,” said CUB Director of Governmental Affairs Bryan McDaniel. “If utilities want to spend money on these expenses, they need to use shareholder money. Consumers deserve a break from such ridiculous costs.”

“During our conversations with Illinois citizens at over 30 events in 2025, utility billpayers expressed disbelief and anger at being charged for standard cost of business expenses that should be paid for by the shareholders of the utilities,” said 350 Chicago Executive Director Larry Coble. “Illinois utility billpayers were appalled to learn they are being charged for utility activities designed to raise their rates even higher.”

“Every year — and 2026 is no exception — Illinoisans are hit with the prospect of paying hundreds of millions more to utility companies for essential electric, gas and water service, even as those companies continue to report record profits,” said Philippe Largent, State Director of AARP Illinois. “On top of that, they expect customers to cover the added costs of pursuing those rate hikes. Enough is enough. It’s unacceptable — especially at a time when older adults and families across our state are already struggling to afford necessities like food, healthcare and prescription drugs.”

CUB encouraged Illinois consumers to visit [CUBActionCenter.com](https://www.cubactioncenter.com) to send a message to their legislators in favor of the Utility Affordability Act.

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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](https://www.CitizensUtilityBoard.org).*

*AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, with a membership of nearly 38 million, that helps people turn their goals and dreams into real possibilities, strengthens communities and fights for the issues that matter most to families such as healthcare, employment and income security, retirement planning, affordable utilities and protection from financial abuse. AARP has staffed offices in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Learn more at <https://states.aarp.org/region/illinois/>.*

*350 Chicago is a non-profit organization that empowers people in Chicago and across Illinois to fight the climate crisis. We are affiliated with [350.org](https://www.350.org) (a grassroots movement focused on the climate crisis), but operate as a separate entity.*