



CITIZENS UTILITY BOARD

Fighting for Illinois Consumers

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CONSUMER ALERT: AMEREN ILLINOIS CUSTOMERS FACE ANOTHER EXPENSIVE SUMMER, CUB URGES UTILITY TO KEEP CUSTOMERS CONNECTED

CHICAGO—Ameren Illinois customers face a second consecutive summer of high bills, the Citizens Utility Board (CUB) said Thursday, spreading the word about the utility's June 1 electricity price. CUB urged Ameren to work with customers struggling to afford their bills to keep them connected in the hot summer, issued a warning about bad alternative supplier deals, and called on the Illinois General Assembly to pass reforms to protect customers from unfair data center-related energy costs.

According to tariffs filed by Ameren in May, the utility's summer supply rate, June through September, will be: **11.326 cents per kilowatt-hour (kWh).**

This rate—which includes the supply price, a transmission charge and a “supply cost adjustment”—is a bit lower than last summer but represents a more than 29 percent increase over Ameren's current price for the first 800 kWh of usage. In October, the price is expected to decrease, although that supply rate has not been finalized.

"We are deeply concerned and frustrated that for the past year electricity bills have been elevated," CUB Executive Director Sarah Moskowitz said. "We will continue to work for state reforms to protect customers from such price spikes, but in the meantime, we call on Ameren to live up to its civic responsibility and work with customers to keep them connected, cool and safe this summer."

CUB helped pass the Clean and Reliable Grid Affordability (CRGA) Act last year. The CRGA Act expands energy efficiency and brings more battery storage to the grid to help protect consumers from this type of market volatility. The watchdog also is working to pass the Illinois POWER Act. The bill (SB 4016/HB 5513) would implement a number of reforms, including requiring data centers to bring their own new clean power if they want electric service that won't be curtailed at times of high demand.

CUB provided information about the price spike as well as consumer tips:

What's the cause? The price for reserve power—called “capacity”—has skyrocketed in recent auctions run by the Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO), the grid operator for all or parts of 15 states, including central and southern Illinois. There are a number of reasons for high prices, including an increase in energy demand from new and proposed data centers. Poor MISO policy also has played a role, including a pricing methodology that CUB said unfairly compromises affordability in capacity auctions.

What part of the bill is impacted? Supply, which is the cost of the actual electricity, and transmission. Ameren does not profit off high prices—under law the utility is required to pass supply costs onto customers with no markup. (Ameren profits from rate hikes on the delivery side of bills.)

If Ameren doesn't profit off this price spike, who does? Big energy companies that sell electricity to utilities stand to make a windfall.

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CUB's online resource, CUBHelpCenter.com, has tips on how to get through an expensive summer:

- **Warning: Beware of alternative supplier rip-offs.** Alternative electricity suppliers are impacted by the same market conditions that are causing utility prices to increase, so be careful about getting lured into bad deals. Recently, CUB saw two offers in Ameren territory that were about 13 cents per kWh. Since 2015, Illinois consumers have lost about \$2 billion to alternative power suppliers. It's likely, even in this expensive market, that your utility is your best bet. If your community has negotiated a power deal with a supplier, don't assume the price is lower than the utility rate. Confirm the price and how it compares with the utility and find out when the offer expires.
- **Practice energy efficiency.** Simple things like weatherizing windows and doors—to keep cool air in and warm air out—can help soften the blow of this price spike. But don't take unnecessary risks that keep your home too hot and threaten your health. Efficiency is about eliminating waste but staying safe and cool this summer.
- **Stay in contact with your utility.** Consumers who are struggling should contact their utility to inquire about energy assistance, payment plans to pay off debt, and energy efficiency programs. CUB called for Ameren to offer good payment plans to help more utility customers pay off their debt and stay connected.
- **See if you qualify for energy assistance.** To learn more about the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), visit www.helpillinoisfamilies.com or call the Help Illinois Families Assistance Line at 1-833-711-0374.
- **Consider a community solar deal to help ease costs.** Community solar offers currently guarantee savings compared to the utility's supply price. But be a careful shopper: Get more information at our special website, SolarInTheCommunity.com.
- **If you're interested in installing solar panels, consider the next steps.** Learn more about [rooftop solar](#). Also, [CUB has information](#) about income-qualified solar programs.
- **Be a good neighbor.** Make sure friends, family and neighbors are safe and cool this summer.

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 helped save consumers more than \$20 billion by blocking rate hikes and securing 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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