



# CITIZENS UTILITY BOARD

## Fighting for Illinois Consumers

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### **CONSUMER ALERT: COM ED SUMMER POWER PRICE ELEVATED DUE TO DATA CENTER ENERGY DEMAND, CUB URGES UTILITY TO KEEP CUSTOMERS CONNECTED**

*Consumer watchdog calls on General Assembly to pass POWER Act to protect customers from data center costs*

**CHICAGO**—Commonwealth Edison customers face a second consecutive summer of high bills, largely due to soaring energy demand sparked by new and proposed data centers, the Citizens Utility Board (CUB) said Thursday. CUB urged ComEd to work with customers struggling to afford their bills this summer and called on the Illinois General Assembly to pass reforms to protect customers from unfair data center-related energy costs.

According to a tariff ComEd filed May 15, the utility's summer supply rate, June through September, is: **10.399 cents per kilowatt-hour (kWh)**. (This rate includes the supply price and a transmission charge.)

Soaring electricity demand has become a major issue in recent years, with the proliferation of data centers to manage energy-intensive artificial intelligence. In fact, ComEd's new summer price represents about a 50 percent increase from two years ago. The price will change in October, but it is expected to continue to be elevated.

A credit made possible by the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA) will continue to give customers some relief, although it will be smaller than what it was in recent months. The law requires a line item on ComEd bills called the Carbon Free Energy Resource Adjustment (CFERA) to subsidize energy generated by Illinois nuclear power plants. But consumer advocates pushed for a provision that changes the charge to a credit when energy prices are high. The amount is adjusted each month, but it is expected to reduce ComEd's price by about 1.3 cents per kWh in June.

Overall, ComEd said customers could pay an average of 12 percent more on their monthly bills—but hotter weather could make that average much higher.

"While we are glad that the CEJA credit will continue to give customers some relief, we are frustrated that for the past year electricity bills have been elevated, largely because of soaring energy demand caused by new and proposed data centers," CUB Executive Director Sarah Moskowitz said. "Without reforms, we risk the possibility of even higher bills and rolling blackouts in the coming years. That's why CUB supports the POWER Act, which would implement common-sense reforms to make data centers in Illinois pay their fair share of energy costs."

The POWER Act (SB 4016/HB 5513) would implement a number of reforms, including requiring data centers to bring their own new clean power if they want firm 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. This has been sparked by power-hungry data centers and poor policies undertaken by the regional power grid operator in ComEd territory. For example, PJM has been slow to fix a clogged "interconnection queue"—the line of power plants, largely wind and solar generators, waiting to connect to the grid.

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

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

CUB's online resource, [CUBHelpCenter.com](http://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. Be wary of low introductory rates that will skyrocket after a short period, and read the fine print for add-on fees that can raise the cost of the plan. 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 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. 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.
- **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 ComEd 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](http://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](http://SolarInTheCommunity.com).
- **If you're interested in installing solar panels, consider the next steps.** Learn more about the [Switch Together program](#), which CUB participates in, and [rooftop solar](#) in general. 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.

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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 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](http://www.CitizensUtilityBoard.org).

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