



Alliance for Fair Utilities

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

June 8, 2015

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Group Warns Other Utility Regulators about Adopting Wisconsin's Policies

MILWAUKEE— This week the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSCW) hosts the Mid-America Regulatory Conference (MARC), with utility regulators from the central United States gathering in Milwaukee. Groups concerned about yet more proposals to increase fixed fees on electricity bills will deliver letters to all conference attendees warning them away from these bad policies.

The group encourages attendees to “please enjoy Wisconsin’s sights, beer, and cheese, but don’t take home our high fixed fees!”

“Wisconsin now has the most regressive electricity billing schemes in the United States thanks to Governor Walker’s appointees on the Public Service Commission,” said Jackie Ivy, with the Alliance for Fair Utilities. “In fact, then-Commissioner (now Chairperson) Ellen Nowak even invited higher fixed fees publicly, while We Energies’ 2014 rate case was under consideration, with We Energies’ CEO on stage with her!”

As the letter states, “Despite unprecedented public outcry – thousands of public comments, dozens of businesses and local governments opposed, and hundreds of people at public hearings - Wisconsin’s Commission enacted the highest fixed charges for any regulated utilities in the Midwest.”

Wisconsin’s Commission is even driving utilities like Xcel to propose vastly different rate policies in Wisconsin than in the other states it serves. Despite being rejected for a fixed fee increase of \$1.50 in Minnesota earlier in 2015, Xcel’s Wisconsin subsidiary is now seeking a \$10 hike in fixed fees here.

“Governor Scott Walker’s appointments to Public Service Commission have given the utility industry direct access to ratepayers’ wallets. RePower Madison is a strong example of the community backlash to regressive utility policy,” said Mitch Brey with RePower Madison. As former Senator Dale Schultz has stated, “we need to put the ‘public’ back in the Public Service Commission.” The City Council of Milwaukee directed city staff to create an Energy Independence Plan that would include options to work with other energy companies.

Unfortunately, these proposals are back. Xcel Energy and Wisconsin Public Service Corporation (WPS) are both seeking approval by the PSC to increase their fixed fees. “WPS must be hungry to seek even higher fixed fees only six months since approval of their last dramatic fixed-fee increase. Seniors, especially those living alone, on fixed incomes don’t get more money to pay their electricity and natural gas bills,” said Mary Stenlund of Green Bay. “How much will be enough? What percentage of a paycheck or a Social Security check is enough for these companies?”

“Governor Walker’s Public Service Commission has betrayed Wisconsin’s rich tradition of regulating utility monopolies. We pioneered utility regulation and now Governor Walker is giving utilities guaranteed money at the expense of customers across Wisconsin,” said Elizabeth Ward of the Sierra Club-John Muir Chapter.

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Alliance for Fair Utilities is a newly-formed coalition of more than a dozen faith, health, environmental, and justice groups concerned about the impacts of increasing the fixed fee portion of electricity bills.