



J O S H U A

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Local Community Members Speak Out Against Proposed \$25 Monthly Electricity Fixed Fee

De Pere— Ahead of the Public Service Commission's (PSC) hearing on the proposed mandatory fixed fee increase by Wisconsin Public Service (WPS), community members are gathering to speak out against the proposals. Residents will share concerns about the impact WPS' \$25 per month mandatory fee could have on the elderly, low-income, and others. Many are shocked to see WPS back with this mandatory fee increase less than a year since the last increase.

“This dramatic increase will hurt the low-income and those that can least absorb it the most. The \$300 per year each customer will pay before they even turn on a light could devastate those already struggling to pay rent, feed their children, and pay their electricity bill,” said Michael Westenberg, Director of Religious Education and Social Outreach at Saint Matthews Parish and member of the Religious Leaders Caucus of Brown County.

“WPS is raising their rates on the backs of low-income customers. Why should someone in a one bedroom apartment bear the same increase as someone like me, who lives in a 3-bedroom house on the east side of Green Bay,” said JOSHUA leadership team member Jim Soletski. “Worse,” he added, “is that the Commissioners are not even here to listen to the struggle so many in Green Bay are going through.”

Other advocates have spoken out about the effect this will have on low-income and fixed-income seniors. The increase disproportionately affects these groups. The high mandatory monthly fee will take away the ability for people to control their energy bills.

“With energy costs consuming as much as 40 percent of a low-income household’s budget, the ability of that household to reduce their usage through energy efficiency – most notably weatherization – is of critical importance to their overall struggles to get out of poverty. Low-income customers will lose control over their energy bills and they won’t be rewarded with savings through energy efficiency,” said Bob Jones, executive director for the Wisconsin Community Action Program Association.

As A.J. Nino Amato, President of the Coalition of Wisconsin Aging Groups (CWAG) said, “We know for a fact, that seniors on fixed income monitor their electricity use closely in order to control their bills and the radical fixed fee increase is unfair and it creates a hardship for them. With the growing income disparities, our elderly citizens are already struggling to pay their monthly utility bills and all too often, have to cut their medication in half or skip a meal, in order to pay their monthly utility bills.”

About 50 people attended the hearing with a handful testifying. Testimonies included the impact on seniors and the low-income, the struggle many (including veterans) already have to pay their bills, and the concern that WPS' monopoly allows them to take advantage of their customers. A much bigger turn-out is expected at the 6:00 hearing.

J U S T I C E O R G A N I Z A T I O N S H A R I N G H O P E & U N I T E D F O R A C T I O N

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