



# NEWS RELEASE

## Alliance for Fair Utilities

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### Residents Call for PSC to Deny WPS's Unfair Rate Proposal

GREEN BAY—Community residents gathered today to express their frustration with the state regulatory agency for electricity and natural gas services. Just last week this agency, Public Service Commission, made a preliminary decision to hike up monthly fees for all residential customers of WPS. For electricity, the fees would go from \$10 to \$19 per month and for natural gas fee they would go to \$18 per month.

[“RENEW Wisconsin released a report today that showed an unprecedented opposition to this rate change. 99% of the commenters were opposed,”](#) said Elizabeth Ward of Alliance for Fair Utilities. “We are here today to ask Commissioners Montgomery, Callisto, and Nowak to stand with the people of Green Bay and reconsider their initial positions on this proposal and instead deny the fixed rate increases.”

Mary Stenlund of Green Bay is one of those opposed and has grave concerns about the proposal. “Retirees and low-use users need protection from WPS because we can’t cover these increases,” she stated. “The proposal places unreasonable burden on users like retired people, elderly, disabled, low-income, college students, and other multi-unit renters. I do believe a customer should pay for what they use, but this increase places an undue burden on low-use users who will on average see their fixed fees (electricity and natural gas) increase by \$196 annually.”

The changes disproportionately affect the lowest-energy users, including fixed-income seniors and low-income users, while reduce bills for the highest energy users. “At St. Vincent de Paul, we spent \$64, 078 from October 2013 through September 2014 helping 243 people pay their heating and electricity bills. We recently handed out 10 weatherization kits to help people hopefully reduce their bills this winter,” explained Jackie Thiry, volunteer at St. Vincent de Paul. “If approved, this billing structure will undermine the effort to help people cut their energy use and could increase the number of participants we are helping.”

Other speakers included those concerned about what impact this will have on fixed-income seniors. “Seniors living off of Social Security aren’t getting more money to pay their electricity and natural gas bills,” said Kelly Titus of Green Bay. “With increased bills on the lower energy users and no way to control their bills, they are going to have to choose what they spend their limited income on. This could result in choices between electricity bills, food, medication, and other essentials.”

The Commissioners are expected to vote on and solidify their decision the week of Thanksgiving. Alliance for Fair Utilities is suggesting people contact the Public Service Commission at (608) 267-7898 to express their concerns.

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