



NEWS RELEASE

Alliance for Fair Utilities

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

October 2, 2014

Contact: Elizabeth Ward, Sierra Club-John Muir Chapter (608) 445-4489

Community Leaders Oppose We Energies Unfair Rate Hike Proposal

MILWAUKEE: State and local organizations, non-profits, faith institutions, grassroots and community leaders, members of the Alliance for Fair Utilities and elected officials have joined together to oppose the proposed rate increase and structure changes by We Energies for 2015 and 2016. The proposed rate hike includes increasing the “fixed cost” or the cost just for having electricity. This will change from \$9.00 to \$16.00 each month, over a 75% increase. By increasing the fixed rate and not the usage fee, every residential customer will see the same increase. Essentially, someone in an apartment trying to make ends meet sees the same increase as someone in a mansion in the suburbs that will barely notice the increase. Effectively, the low-energy (and often low-income) users are subsidizing the high-energy users.

“We Energies has proposed to fundamentally change the way bills are formulated. This structural change will add hardship to low-energy users including apartment-dwellers and those who have invested in energy efficiency projects,” said Elizabeth Ward, Conservation Programs Coordinator for the Sierra Club-John Muir Chapter.

Community leaders are concerned about the effect this will have on low-income community families. “If approved by Public Service Commission, the proposal will increase the fixed charge or fee for having electricity. Our families are concerned about the effect this proposed rate increase will have on those who will have a harder time paying a higher electricity bill and who would normally reduce their electrical use if struggling to pay the electricity bill one month,” added Reverend Willie Briscoe from MICAH.

“CWAG is shocked and disappointed, Wisconsin's Public Utilities are nearly doubling their fixed fee rate, which will financially harm the 1.3 million elderly and people with disabilities in Wisconsin. 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,” stated A.J. Nino Amato, President of the Coalition of Wisconsin Aging Groups (CWAG). “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. CWAG’s 125,000 elderly members, are requesting the PSC to deny the requests of both utilities and demand that they come back with a plan that is fair for all parties.”

The group is asking the Public Service Commission to deny We Energies proposed rate increases and are calling to Wisconsin residents to attend the public hearing, held by the Wisconsin Public Service Commission next Wednesday, October 8 at the Wilson Senior Center, located at 2601 W Howard Ave. Milwaukee, WI 53221. Hearings will be held at 2pm and 6pm, with a rally at 5:30pm featuring speakers from the community.

###