

Citizens Utility Board: WEC customers - make your voice heard. Public hearings on big rate cases next week

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MADISON — We Energies and Wisconsin Public Service customers have an opportunity to make their voices heard in rate cases that will set utility prices for 2023.

Public hearings will take place next week in Green Bay and Milwaukee, and the Public Service Commission will accept written comments for a short time after those hearings.

The hearings come as new information has surfaced about the size of the increase customers face.

We Energies and WPS initially estimated that residential customers' rates would increase 5% to 6%, or about \$6 a month. That would have been *lower than the overall average* increase.

However, the utilities are now favoring big corporations' bid for a smaller increase, while saddling residential customers with *much larger than average increases* of more than 13% for We Energies customers and more than 14% for WPS customers.

CUB has expressed dismay to the Public Service Commission in our testimony and legal briefs in the case. Simply put, forcing residential customers to bear the brunt of this year's increase should not happen.

"The utilities have pulled the rug out from under the residential customers by

switching positions, from initially favoring residential customers with a smaller than average increase, to now making residential customers shoulder a much higher than average increase,” said Tom Content, executive director of CUB.

If not remedied, this problem will eliminate benefits CUB achieved for residential customers in a [settlement](#) with the utilities, under which the utilities agreed to write off \$34 million in unpaid bills and late fees customers faced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. If the PSC accepts the utilities’ new position, those savings will flow to big manufacturing companies rather than to residential customers.

CUB’s expert testimony and advocacy also focused on the fact that utility profits have been way too high for far too long.

CUB’s analysis found the utilities are seeking a profit rate, or return on equity, that is far above what utility shareholders need, and that the utilities focused exclusively on the interests of shareholders and not customers when proposing their preferred profit rate, 10%-10.2%.

The CUB position, seeking a profit rate of 9-9.1%, is supported by new [research](#) from the UC-Berkeley Haas Business School Energy Institute that found utility customers are overpaying by \$2 billion to \$20 billion every year on utility bills – just because of overly generous profits to monopoly utilities.

Here is information on the public hearings and where to file a public comment online in these two cases.

WPS

What: Public Hearing on case 6690-UR-127

When: 2 p.m. and 6 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 1

Where: Neville Public Museum, 210 Museum Place, Green Bay

Comment in Writing: If WPS customers cannot attend, they are encouraged to file a public comment online by Thursday, Nov. 3 on the PSC [Public Comments](#) page: <https://apps.psc.wi.gov/ERF/ERF/comment/filecomment.aspx?util=6690&case=UR&num=127>

We Energies (Wisconsin Electric and Wisconsin Gas)

What: Public Hearing on case 5-UR-110

When: 2 p.m. and 6 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 3

Where: Washington Park Senior Center, 4420 W. Vliet St., Milwaukee

Comment in Writing: If We Energies customers cannot attend, they are encouraged to file a comment online by Monday, Nov. 7 on the PSC [Public Comments](#) page:

<https://apps.psc.wi.gov/ERF/ERF/comment/filecomment.aspx?util=5&case=UR&num=110>

For More Information:

CUB Tracks [podcast](#) about the WEC hearings

CUB YouTube [video](#) about WEC hearings

CUB [Summary](#) of Rate Case Settlement, Position on Exorbitant Profits

CUB [Reply Brief](#) (closing argument) in the WPS case

CUB [Reply Brief](#) (closing argument) in the We Energies case