



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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CONTACTS: Jim Chilsen, CUB, 312-513-1784,
jchilsen@citizensutilityboard.org
Abe Scarr, Illinois PIRG, 312-983-2789,
abe@illinoispirg.org
Monika Wnuk, AARP Illinois, 773-742-3743,
mwnuk@aarp.org,

**ENOUGH IS ENOUGH: NICOR GAS CUSTOMERS TO USE STATE FORUM THURSDAY NIGHT TO
SPEAK OUT AGAINST UTILITY'S PUSH FOR RECORD RATE HIKE**

CHICAGO – Many Nicor Gas customers may not know that their utility is trying to hit them with the largest gas rate hike in Illinois history, but a state public forum Thursday night in Elgin is an opportunity to speak out against the company's fifth rate-hike request in recent years.

The Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC) is holding a public forum—requested by AARP Illinois—on Nicor Gas' request for an unprecedented \$316.5 million rate increase – **7 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 7 (TONIGHT)** at Hemmens Cultural Center, 45 Symphony Way, Elgin, IL 60120. Utility watchdogs have warned the proposal would raid consumers for at least double the amount Nicor can request within the boundaries of state law.

Please note: The Citizens Utility Board (CUB), Illinois PIRG and AARP Illinois will be available for interviews in advance and on-site in both English and Spanish. At least part of the forum will be live-streamed from the Facebook pages of AARP (facebook.com/AARPIllinois), PIRG (facebook.com/ILPIRG) and CUB (facebook.com/cubillinois).

Those who can't make the forum can join hundreds of people who have signed a [CUB petition](#) or filed a [public comment with the ICC](#) against Nicor's rate-hike request.

Nicor embarked on its quest to obtain a record-high rate hike for an Illinois gas utility in January of this year, and the tally has only expanded since then, from about \$309 million to \$316.5 million ([Docket No. 25-0055](#)). Nicor customers have expressed frustration at the company's serial rate hikes: This would be Nicor's fifth since 2017. In that same time period—from 2017 to 2024—the utility has raised delivery rates by 114 percent, totaling \$747 million, and its parent, Southern Co., has made \$25.2 billion in profits.

"Northern Illinoisans have told us that they oppose the proposed increase from Nicor," said Al Hollenbeck, Volunteer State President of AARP Illinois. "This hike, on top of several other utility hikes in recent years, disproportionately affects older adults on fixed incomes, who are already struggling to keep up with the ever-growing cost of living in the state. They simply cannot afford higher gas bills and AARP is committed to advocating on their behalf against this proposed rate hike."

"Nicor customers are tired of their gas utility treating them like an ATM," said Mardi Klevs, a Nicor customer and volunteer board member for CUB. "This record rate hike is full of waste and excess, including an exorbitant profit rate for Nicor shareholders as well as extravagant executive bonuses. We need customers to tell state regulators loud and clear: Enough is enough."

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309 W. Washington St., Suite 800, Chicago, IL 60606
Phone (312) 263-4282 | Toll Free 800-669-5556 | Fax (312) 263 4329

The Illinois Attorney General's Office and consumer advocates such as the Citizens Utility Board (CUB) and Illinois PIRG have argued that Nicor's rate-hike request is unjust and unreasonable. Together, advocates have uncovered more than \$150 million in overcharges, and say Nicor's request is at least double what the utility can possibly justify under the law. A few problems advocates have identified:

Excessive profit rate for shareholders. Nicor is pushing to increase its "Return on Equity" (ROE)—or profit rate for shareholders—from about 9.51 percent to 10.35 percent. That would needlessly cost customers \$47.4 million a year, CUB argues. To make matters worse, Nicor's proposal to spread that wealth across more shareholders, increasing its "equity ratio," would cost another \$28.6 million a year. That comes out to a total of \$76 million.

Lavish executive bonuses. Nicor wants to force customers to pay for bonuses the company gives to executives for reaching financial goals that help enrich shareholders but have absolutely no benefit to customers. This would improperly raise costs for customers by \$18.1 million a year, CUB argues.

High customer charge. Nicor wants to burden customers with a higher fixed customer charge, raising it from \$19.48 to \$23.41 a month. That would give customers less control over their bills and hurt their efforts to use energy efficiency to save money. (Consumer advocates Illinois PIRG and Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) want to lower the customer charge.)

The ICC will issue a final ruling on Nicor's rate-hike request in November. If approved, Nicor's rate hike would increase average gas bills by about 9 percent, or about \$7.70 a month/more than \$92 a year, and push the utility's total increases to more than \$1 billion in less than a decade.

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AARP is the nation's largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to empowering people 50 and older to choose how they live as they age. With a nationwide presence and nearly 38 million members, AARP strengthens communities and advocates for what matters most to families: health security, financial stability and personal fulfillment. To learn about AARP's work in Illinois, visit www.aarp.org/IL or [@AARPIllinois](https://twitter.com/AARPIllinois).

Illinois PIRG is an advocate for the public interest. We speak out for the public and stand up to special interests on problems that affect the public's health, safety and wellbeing.

For more than 40 years the **Citizens Utility Board (CUB)** has been Illinois' leading nonprofit utility watchdog group. Created by the Illinois Legislature, CUB opened its doors in 1984 to represent the interests of residential and small-business utility customers. Since then, CUB has helped save consumers more than \$20 billion by blocking rate hikes and securing refunds. For more information, call CUB's Consumer Hotline at 1-800-669-5556 or visit CUB's website, www.CitizensUtilityBoard.org.