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STATE OF MISSOURI
PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION
TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

Local Public Hearing
October 5, 2017
Sunset Hills City Hall
Council Chambers
3939 South Lindbergh Boulevard
St. Louis, MO 63127

Volume IX

In The Matter of Laclede)
Gas Company's Request to) File No. GR-2017-0215
Increase Its Revenues for)
Gas Service)

In The Matter of Laclede)
Gas Company d/b/a Missouri)
Gas Energy's Request to) File No. GR-2017-0216
Increase Its Revenues for)
Gas Service)

NANCY DIPPELL, Presiding
SENIOR REGULATORY LAW JUDGE

STEPHEN M. STOLL,
SCOTT T. RUPP,
MAIDA J. COLEMAN,
COMMISSIONERS

REPORTED BY:
AMANDA N. FARRAR, CCR
MIDWEST LITIGATION SERVICES

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1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 (The hearing commenced at 1:04 p.m.)

3 JUDGE DIPPELL: So, this is October 5th,
4 2017, and this time has been set for a local public
5 hearing in File No. GR-2017-0215 and GR-2017-0216.
6 Those are in the matter of Laclede Gas Company's
7 request to increase its revenues for gas service,
8 and in the matter of Laclede Gas Company doing
9 business as Missouri Gas Energy's request to
10 increase its revenues for its gas service. The
11 company has since changed its name to Spire, Inc.

12 My name is Nancy Dippell and I'm a
13 regulatory law judge with the Public Service
14 Commission. My job today is to run the public
15 hearing. And I have with me three of our
16 commissioners who I would like to introduce to you.
17 Beginning on the far left of my far left,
18 Commissioner Stoll.

19 COMMISSIONER STOLL: I just wanted to
20 welcome everyone, to tell you that we're here to
21 listen to your comments and our concerns about your
22 experience with Laclede now Spire, and this is the
23 beginning of the process. We have these local
24 public hearings. I think we're having 11 total and
25 then we have evidentiary hearings in Jefferson City

1 in December. And so, the case is just starting.

2 And if you know someone who couldn't be
3 here, but wants to make comments, they can also do
4 that. They can talk -- you could talk to our staff
5 who have a table outside, I'm sure the Office of
6 Public Counsel, regarding that. So, welcome and I
7 look forward to hearing your comments.

8 JUDGE DIPPELL: I also have with me
9 today Commissioner Rupp.

10 COMMISSIONER RUPP: Great. Welcome.
11 One thing I want to clarify, as this comes up a lot,
12 is we are unable to answer any of your questions.
13 So, if you pose a question to us when you are making
14 your statements, we will not answer. It's not that
15 we're being rude or dismissive. Just think of,
16 like, if you're in a courtroom and the Judge doesn't
17 respond to questions. He just sits there and
18 listens, because we have to take in all evidence,
19 which we will -- we will do and this is the very
20 beginning of the case. So, just wanted to clarify
21 that because sometimes people maybe get the wrong
22 opinion of that we're being obtuse of something, but
23 no. We just cannot respond.

24 JUDGE DIPPELL: And also Commissioner
25 Coleman on my right.

1 COMMISSIONER COLEMAN: Thank you.

2 Thank you so much for being here today.
3 It's appreciated. We look forward to your
4 testimony. I'm especially interested in any
5 concerns you have regarding customer service. So,
6 we do look forward to your comments.

7 JUDGE DIPPELL: So, the way the process
8 is going to work today is that I will go through the
9 list of people that have so far signed up to
10 testify. We do have several people that would like
11 to testify and because we have other hearings going
12 on this evening we're going to have to limit the
13 testimony to 3 o'clock and I'll give each of you
14 five minutes to start. If there's time left
15 afterwards, I'd be happy to let people that didn't
16 get a chance maybe to say everything to come back
17 up. Also, if you've previously testified -- I'm not
18 sure if anybody here has been at previous hearings.

19 MS. NELSON: I have.

20 JUDGE DIPPELL: If you've previously
21 testified, then I would ask you to wait until the
22 end of the testimony.

23 MS. NELSON: I'm at the bottom of the
24 list.

25 JUDGE DIPPELL: Thank you.

1 So, because your comments from the
2 previous testimony are on the record, and if you
3 have something additional to add I'll let you do
4 that at the end of the hearing.

5 Also, I would say I have a timer up
6 here. I'll just let you know. When you're getting,
7 like, to a minute, I'll wave at you or something,
8 let you know you have one minute left.

9 We do take testimony under oath or
10 affirmation. So, when you come to the podium to
11 speak, I will ask you to state your name and to
12 spell it for the court reporter so she gets it in
13 the record correctly, and then I will ask you to
14 swear under oath or affirmation that the testimony
15 you're about to give is the truth.

16 So, I will also ask you if you will stay
17 at the podium until you're excused. Sometimes there
18 are clarifying questions that we want to ask after
19 you've spoken.

20 So, with that, I'd like to ask the
21 attorneys present to go ahead and make their entries
22 of appearance, and I'll start with Commission Staff.

23 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Judge. I'm
24 Mark Johnson appearing on behalf of the Staff of the
25 Public Service Commission and I've provided my

1 contact information to the court reporter.

2 JUDGE DIPPELL: Thank you.

3 The company?

4 MR. ZUCKER: Rick Zucker here on behalf
5 of Laclede Gas Company now known as Spire Missouri,
6 Inc.

7 JUDGE DIPPELL: And the Office of the
8 Public Counsel?

9 MS. SHEMWELL: Good afternoon. Thank
10 you. Lera Shemwell representing the Office of the
11 Public Counsel. I will give my information to the
12 court reporter. Thank you.

13 JUDGE DIPPELL: Thank you.

14 And are there any intervenors present
15 that wish to make an entry?

16 MR. COFFMAN: Yes. I'm John Coffman.
17 I'm representing the Consumers Council of Missouri.

18 JUDGE DIPPELL: Thank you, Mr. Coffman.

19 Are there any other intervenors?

20 All right. Then we can go ahead and
21 begin with our first witness and it's Michael
22 Caramanna. Is that how -- am I saying that
23 correctly, sir?

24 MR. CARAMANNA: Yes, close enough.
25 Thank you.

1 I'll try and do this in five minutes.

2 I've got quite a bit to say.

3 JUDGE DIPPELL: Okay. Let me go ahead
4 and swear you in.

5 MICHAEL CARAMANNA,
6 being first duly sworn, testified under oath as
7 follows:

8 JUDGE DIPPELL: Would you, please, state
9 your name and spell it for the court reporter.

10 MR. CARAMANNA: Michael Caramanna. Last
11 name is C-A-R-A-M-A-N-N-A.

12 JUDGE DIPPELL: Please go ahead with
13 your comments.

14 MR. CARAMANNA: I'm here to tell you
15 that this is going to disturb the Laclede/Spire
16 people. I've got three things I want to bring up.
17 I'm going to try and do them as quickly as possible,
18 but I think all three of them are important.

19 First of all, Laclede's service is not
20 what it should be. I'll cite an example going back
21 just a few years. I smelled gas, a tremendous
22 amount of gas out in front of my home. It took
23 many, many visits before Laclede addressed it. They
24 couldn't find the leak. I was told they have a lot
25 of leaks, sometimes we can't find them. What

1 happened is all through the summer I smelled gas, I
2 called it in. All through the fall I called it in.
3 In the winter the ground froze and the gas didn't go
4 up and out. It went into my garage and it filled my
5 garage with gas. I live in a townhouse condo. It's
6 a couple-million-dollar building. When I finally
7 told them that, they sent a C&M crew out, a
8 three-man crew in the dead of winter. One stayed in
9 the truck, which was reasonable because it was cold,
10 and two worked. They alternated. They did a good
11 job. They dug straight down and there was a cut in
12 the gas line. It should have been addressed months
13 sooner. Had I not been home and my garage filled
14 with gas, the whole building could have gone up.
15 Who knows?

16 Okay. Second scenario. I smelled, a
17 few years back, gas in my basement in my utility
18 room where my gas water heater is and the gas meter
19 is there as well. Well, repeatedly I called
20 Laclede. Repeatedly they sent people out. "There's
21 no gas leak." I smell gas. I know what it smells
22 like. Now, I say -- I'm a layman. I say I smelled
23 gas. I know I'm not smelling the gas. I'm smelling
24 the chemical I believe called Mercaptan. That being
25 said, I'm smelling gas. I call them repeatedly.

1 They come out four different times. On the fourth
2 time, the fourth man finds a gas leak. Three times
3 they couldn't find a gas leak. I had to wait till
4 my utility room fills with gas and they come and
5 actually smell it themselves, and then he diligently
6 found where the leak was, which was in the water
7 heater. Not good. Both cases not good.

8 Third case. I wouldn't be here today.
9 I got a notice about your hearing and when I got it,
10 I put it in the trash, and I believe it was the same
11 day I got my gas bill and on my gas bill there's an
12 extra dollar, Dollar for Help. Now, I'm not opposed
13 to helping people. However, I choose to do it my
14 way. I work through the Salvation Army. That's
15 where I try and do my altruistic giving. That being
16 said, I called and they said, oh, that's a mistake,
17 we'll take that dollar off. All right.

18 Now, I want to tell you that it's not
19 the first time it happened. I never signed up for
20 Dollar Help. It happened in 2013, it happened in
21 2014, and it happened just on my last bill, 2017.
22 It's unethical and it's inappropriate to
23 indiscriminately put costs on people's gas bill
24 whether I can afford it or not. It's my choice. I
25 never check any boxes.

1 You know, there was a situation I'd like
2 to remind you of with Wells Fargo that did the same
3 damn thing. Okay. They got in a lot of trouble for
4 it. So, somebody at Laclede Gas has authorized the
5 placing of Dollar Help on people's bills that
6 haven't requested it.

7 When I called, I asked for a director,
8 department director, director of customer service or
9 something to call me so that I could visit with him
10 and tell someone with authority how unethical and
11 inappropriate it was. No one called me. Had they
12 called me, I wouldn't be here today.

13 So, in closing, Laclede Gas has got a
14 lot of problems that you folks may not know about
15 that I felt I should share with you. On two
16 occasions my building could have blown up, multiple
17 times couldn't find anything wrong, and then there's
18 a billing issue. Someone at Laclede has authorized
19 the placement again of Dollar Help on people's bills
20 that haven't asked for it, haven't marked for it.
21 All right? It's a matter of principle. It's
22 unethical and it should stop, and someone's
23 responsible for it and someone knows about it.

24 Thank you all very much for your time.
25 I appreciate it very much.

1 JUDGE DIPPELL: Thank you, sir, very
2 much for your comments. Those are very insightful
3 and the Commission will definitely take those into
4 account.

5 Mr. Zucker, you look like you would like
6 to say something.

7 MR. ZUCKER: I'd like to ask a couple of
8 questions of the witness, if I could.

9 JUDGE DIPPELL: Go right ahead.

10 MR. ZUCKER: Mr. Caramanna, how long
11 have you been a customer of Laclede Gas Company?

12 MR. CARAMANNA: About 25 years.

13 MR. ZUCKER: Has the Dollar Help
14 incident that you just described happened, did it
15 ever happen before 2013?

16 MR. CARAMANNA: Yes. As I -- as I
17 stated in my testimony, it was on my bill in 2013
18 and removed, it was on my bill in 2014 and removed,
19 and it was on my recent bill in 2017 and it has been
20 removed. And your source support service person,
21 that was the title they gave me -- I couldn't get to
22 anybody in a management to speak to or to return my
23 call. Your source support person substantiated
24 those numbers. It's a repeated problem. If it's
25 happening to me, it's happening to a lot of people.

1 And that dollar helps Laclede's bottom line because
2 you use that money. Although, it's just a dollar,
3 \$12 a year from a customer, you use it to supplement
4 bills that have not been paid.

5 MR. ZUCKER: So, did it happen before
6 2013 that you recall?

7 MR. CARAMANNA: Not that I recall. I
8 wasn't paying that much attention.

9 MR. ZUCKER: Well, I apologize for the
10 inconvenience we've caused you and I thank you for
11 bringing these to the attention of us and the
12 Commission.

13 MR. CARAMANNA: And again, I want to say
14 that had someone returned my call, someone in
15 authority returned my call, I wouldn't be here.

16 MR. ZUCKER: And I apologize for that
17 also.

18 JUDGE DIPPELL: Thank you.

19 COMMISSIONER COLEMAN: Thank you,
20 Mr. Caramanna.

21 COMMISSIONER STOLL: Thank you for your
22 testimony.

23 MR. CARAMANNA: I appreciate your time.

24 JUDGE DIPPELL: Oh, I'm sorry.

25 Mr. Caramanna, one moment. Ms. Shemwell with Public

1 Counsel wanted to ask you something else.

2 MS. SHEMWELL: Good afternoon, sir. The
3 Commission has been very active in gas safety
4 department. You can -- if you're having problems
5 with a safety issue, you should give them a call.
6 There's an 800 number. I don't have it here, but
7 they absolutely can help you.

8 MR. CARAMANNA: I appreciate it. But
9 these things happen every once in a while. It's not
10 an issue that happens every day.

11 MS. SHEMWELL: Right.

12 MR. CARAMANNA: If it was, then we
13 really would have a serious problem. We'd all be in
14 trouble.

15 MS. SHEMWELL: Right. Gas is highly
16 combustible and that's why it's good fuel, but when
17 you smell gas and if you're not getting a good
18 response, call the Commission Staff and they will
19 work with Laclede. Thank you, sir.

20 MR. CARAMANNA: Thank you.

21 COMMISSIONER STOLL: Thank you.

22 COMMISSIONER RUPP: Thank you.

23 JUDGE DIPPELL: All right. Our next
24 witness is George Cearlock.

25 Would you, please, raise your right

1 hand.

2 GEORGE CEARLOCK,
3 being first duly sworn, testified under oath as
4 follows:

5 JUDGE DIPPELL: Would you, please, state
6 your name and spell it for the court reporter.

7 MR. CEARLOCK: My name is George
8 Cearlock, C-E-A-R-L-O-C-K.

9 JUDGE DIPPELL: Go ahead with your
10 comments.

11 MR. CEARLOCK: Well, first of all, I'd
12 like to thank all of you for being here and
13 listening to our comments.

14 And my comments are mainly pertaining to
15 my own particular situation, but I also -- I'm a
16 senior citizen, I'm a veteran, and there's some
17 other senior citizens and veterans out there and I'm
18 sure they have some of the similar problems that I
19 have. So, mainly what I want to express is just
20 where I'm at, but I'm sure some of those others
21 share particular situation similar to mine.

22 JUDGE DIPPELL: If I can get you to step
23 up just a little closer to the microphone so they
24 can all hear you back there. We can hear you.

25 MR. CEARLOCK: Can you hear me back

1 there?

2 Okay. Well, first of all, I'm opposed
3 to the rate increase requested by Laclede Gas and
4 Spire. And like I said before, many of my fellow
5 seniors and I have helped Laclede Gas get to where
6 they are now as far as the company because I had
7 been a customer for approximately 64 years. So,
8 it's not a new company to me, and I've been pleased
9 with their service, but the rate increase brings a
10 big problem to me and I'm sure with some of the
11 other seniors here. And I would like, if possible,
12 regarding this rate increase that it would help a
13 lot of the seniors age 62 or over to get a
14 10 percent discount on their bill. As another
15 option, if the company is given a rate increase of,
16 say, 5 percent or 10 percent or whatever, then a
17 similar percentage of reduction should be made from
18 the senior's statement when the gas company sends it
19 out. In other words, this would keep them within
20 their budget and their resources.

21 Laclede Gas has no competing company.
22 It is a monopoly. We as customers have no options.
23 Either we pay the rate or our gas is shut off. I'm
24 90 years old, a resident of Crestwood for 31 years.
25 My main source of income is my Social Security,

1 which is \$1,276 a month. We need help, not
2 expenses. It's important to keep people in their
3 homes and maintain property values. We need the
4 essentials of gas, water, electric without giving up
5 our food, clothing, and medical needs. And this is
6 really what concerned me is when we have to cut our
7 budget, pay for gas, electric or whatever, we're on
8 fixed incomes. We have no resources to increase our
9 income to pay for these. It sounds like a small
10 increase, but when you have a small income, it
11 amounts to quite a bit.

12 I certainly appreciate your listening
13 and hope that you come up with a just decision
14 today.

15 JUDGE DIPPELL: Thank you, sir. And
16 thank you for your service.

17 COMMISSIONER STOLL: Thank you for your
18 testimony. No questions.

19 COMMISSIONER RUPP: Thank you very much.

20 COMMISSIONER STOLL: Thank you.

21 JUDGE DIPPELL: All right. Thank you,
22 sir.

23 And I would just tell the attorneys if
24 you would just signal to me if you have a question.
25 Otherwise, I'm going to keep moving.

1 Marie Ingraham.

2 MARIE INGRAHAM,

3 being first duly sworn, testified under oath as
4 follows:

5 JUDGE DIPPELL: Would you, please, state
6 your name and spell it for the court reporter.

7 MS. INGRAHAM: Marie, M-A-R-I-E,
8 Ingraham, I-N-G-R-A-H-A-M.

9 JUDGE DIPPELL: Go ahead with your
10 comments.

11 MS. INGRAHAM: Thank you.

12 I would just like to say, as the
13 gentleman before me, that I'm also a veteran and
14 also retired on a fixed income.

15 So, I would just like to say that I very
16 strongly agree with the OPC's position that they
17 printed in this handout that Laclede's rates are
18 currently higher than what is necessary and rate
19 decreases should be ordered. This is due in part to
20 the audit performed by the Commission Staff and
21 filed September 8th, 2017, showing Laclede's rates
22 should be lowered. OPC also opposes certain changes
23 requested by the company, including their request
24 for high 10.35 profit margin on all of their plant
25 investments, and I agree with that and would like to

1 see that happen. Thank you very much.

2 JUDGE DIPPELL: Thank you, ma'am. Thank
3 you for your service.

4 COMMISSIONER COLEMAN: Thank you.

5 COMMISSIONER STOLL: Thank you.

6 JUDGE DIPPELL: Sharon Wells.

7 Ms. Wells, you testified earlier at an earlier
8 hearing. Could I ask you to wait?

9 MS. WELLS: At a previous hearing?

10 JUDGE DIPPELL: Yes.

11 MS. WELLS: Yes.

12 JUDGE DIPPELL: Could I ask you to wait
13 and give comments after we've had everybody else,
14 please.

15 MS. WELLS: Okay.

16 JUDGE DIPPELL: Thank you. Sorry.

17 Clarence Bruins?

18 Jim Scheer?

19 MR. SCHEER: Good afternoon.

20 COMMISSIONER COLEMAN: Good afternoon,
21 sir.

22 JIM SCHEER,
23 being first duly sworn, testified under oath as
24 follows:

25 JUDGE DIPPELL: Thank you. If you could

1 spell your name for the court reporter.

2 MR. SCHEER: Last name is spelled
3 S-C-H-E-E-R. I reside in Eureka, Missouri.

4 JUDGE DIPPELL: Go ahead with your
5 comments.

6 MR. SCHEER: I'm against the rate
7 increase for several reasons. One of them being the
8 cost of the conversion with the new name. I don't
9 think that any of the customers should bear that
10 expense. I personally think they could have
11 continued to operate under the name of Laclede and
12 the people in Alabama, they could have operated
13 under their name. I don't think it was necessary to
14 go to all these expenses.

15 Secondly, in my opinion, the gas company
16 has a monopoly. I don't know who their competitors
17 are supposed to be. I've asked a few gas employees.
18 They say, well, Ameren, you know, the electric
19 utilities, but if you didn't have the electric
20 utilities in the house, you couldn't operate a
21 forced air gas furnace. So, I don't think that that
22 is accurate.

23 I think that pretty well sums it up.
24 Thank you.

25 JUDGE DIPPELL: All right. Thank you

1 for your comments.

2 COMMISSIONER RUPP: Sir.

3 MR. SCHEER: Yes, sir.

4 COMMISSIONER RUPP: I would recommend
5 you talk to the Staff of the Public Service
6 Commission and they can explain to you how the
7 company is regulated in the fact that they are a
8 monopoly, and they could probably give some
9 explanation to you so you can understand how they
10 are operating. At the end if you want to talk to
11 that gentleman in the red and blue tie.

12 MR. SCHEER: Okay.

13 JUDGE DIPPELL: Barbara Biondo.

14 BARBARA BIONDO,
15 being first duly sworn, testified under oath as
16 follows:

17 JUDGE DIPPELL: Could you, please, state
18 your name and spell it for the court reporter.

19 MS. BIONDO: My name is Barbara Biondo.
20 B-A-R-B-A-R-A, and the last name is Biondo,
21 B-I-O-N-D-O.

22 JUDGE DIPPELL: Can I get you to try
23 pulling that up a little bit more again.

24 Yeah, that's probably better.

25 MS. BIONDO: Okay. First of all, I'd

1 like to say I'm opposed to this rate increase.
2 Number one, because I have started on Social
3 Security this past year and then I turned 65 and I
4 started on Medicare. So, that was another chunk
5 that came out of my Social Security check, and then
6 it's this, that, and the other thing. So, then the
7 phone bill went up a little bit, and now I get a
8 notice from Laclede Gas or Spire that they want a
9 rate increase, and it's kind of like wait a minute
10 here. I'm just starting out on this Social
11 Security, Medicare thing and I'm already finding out
12 I've got to start cutting corners here and, you
13 know. So, I'm just at the beginning of this and I
14 feel very sorry for these older people here that are
15 really having to cut corners as far as trying to get
16 foods paid for and medicines paid for and everything
17 else. We shouldn't, as older adults, have to worry
18 about trying to stay warm in the winter or deciding
19 whether to go to the grocery store or anything else.

20 And I also would like to say these
21 landlords or slumlords that are down in the city
22 that are charging these outrageous rents to these
23 low-income people should be required to insulate
24 those buildings so then they don't have to pay the
25 outrageous amounts for their heating and cooling. I

1 think it's ridiculous that you have people that are
2 out on the streets because they don't have the money
3 to pay for the utilities. They've got to choose
4 whether they're going to have a roof over their head
5 or whether they're going to freeze to death in the
6 wintertime. I don't think it's right.

7 And the CEOs of Spire are making a lot
8 more money and getting increases than what we are in
9 our Social Security checks. Our Social Security
10 check only went up \$20 in a few years and then all
11 of a sudden it's like, okay, telephone company's
12 going to take some more, Laclede Gas is going to
13 take some more, Union Electric is going to take some
14 more. It's ridiculous. I mean, you know, it's like
15 you got to figure out, you know, whether to pay
16 Peter or to pay Paul or whatever, and you shouldn't
17 have to do this when you've been paying into this
18 system for 65 years of your life and worked hard. I
19 worked hard for 43 years of my life and put into the
20 system and now I've got to figure out how I'm going
21 to be able to live from year to year and try to put
22 some money away. It's ridiculous. And I feel sorry
23 for the younger people after me trying to get
24 through Social Security and trying to get through
25 every month of their life and every year and try to

1 be able to save some money. They better start
2 putting some money away and really, really saving
3 because if they're trying to live on what the
4 government is giving us, they're not going to have
5 enough money, and as long as the utilities keep
6 raising our rates and this infrastructure thing and
7 everything like that.

8 I mean, we've already paid out -- I live
9 in West County. Okay? They already put new gas
10 lines and infrastructure and stuff. Why should I be
11 paying for that again? It's already done. If
12 they're going to do it in a certain area, then
13 charge those certain customers for a little bit
14 until it's paid for or the construction and then
15 take it away. I mean, you shouldn't have to be
16 constantly paying for something that's already done
17 in front of your house, you know. They already
18 redid the streets in front of our house. Instead of
19 it being a two-lane road, they added a central
20 turning lane and stuff. So, they replaced all the
21 gas lines and stuff like that. So, I don't mind
22 paying for that, but to keep paying for it and
23 paying for it and paying for it so the CEO can get a
24 vacation place or be able to take off his tax
25 incentives, you know, and getting shares of stock

1 all the time and he's going to retire on a lot more
2 than what I'm retiring on. And I don't think it's
3 right for us little people to have to stand for it
4 any longer.

5 And I'm sorry I got too upset or I got
6 too loud, but I have been to these Public Service
7 Commission meetings and it's always the same thing.
8 We little people get up here and testify and nobody
9 does anything as far as helping us because what
10 happens is they turn around and they raise the rates
11 no matter what.

12 And that's all I have to say and I'll be
13 quiet. I'm sorry I got loud.

14 JUDGE DIPPELL: No apologies. Thank you
15 for your testimony.

16 COMMISSIONER COLEMAN: Thank you.

17 COMMISSIONER STOLL: Thank you for your
18 testimony.

19 JUDGE DIPPELL: Carol Jansen?

20 And I did want to say, those of you -- I
21 notice some of you are having to leave. You can
22 submit comments on our website or in writing and you
23 can get any of that information at the table out
24 front if you have to leave before you testify.

25 JUDGE DIPPELL: Jerry L. Jones.

1 MR. JONES: That will be me.

2 JUDGE DIPPELL: Are you able to come
3 forward, sir, or do you need to --

4 MR. JONES: I just need a moment to get
5 my feet in sync with my body.

6 JUDGE DIPPELL: We could get you a chair
7 if you need to sit.

8 MR. JONES: Did I raise it high enough?

9 JUDGE DIPPELL: That's fine.

10 JERRY JONES,
11 being first duly sworn, testified under oath as
12 follows:

13 JUDGE DIPPELL: Could you, please, state
14 your name and spell it for the court reporter.

15 MR. JONES: Jerry Jones, J-E-R-R-Y
16 J-O-N-E-S.

17 JUDGE DIPPELL: And you can go ahead
18 with your comments.

19 MR. JONES: Well, there's been a lot of
20 talk about people being opposed to this. When I was
21 talking to the representative for Spire, I'll use
22 the proper name, he indicated he wanted to lower the
23 amount for monthly costs and we were talking like
24 \$20 down to 17, but increasing the amount of usage.
25 I'm against the increase of usage because in the

1 winter months my gas bill is a lot higher by 40 or
2 \$50 over the usage. I think it's 180 is the highest
3 I had last year. So, what I'm saying is if there's
4 anything to be reduced or increased, not the basic.
5 Basic, they may increase it a dollar or two, but
6 don't let them do the usage because the usage is
7 what -- is where they're going to make their offset
8 profit. Okay?

9 And number two, when I was talking to
10 him, he said about the four companies that they have
11 now acquired and then all the sudden we're hearing a
12 rate hike. Sure, we haven't had a rate hike in four
13 years. That's fine. I have no problem with that.
14 I'd like to see it another 15 years, but unlikely to
15 happen. But if a company can buy four other
16 companies, okay, and now they got mortgages, they
17 got costs, where'd all this money come from for them
18 to be able to purchase these other companies, a gas
19 company? It's almost like they're trying to build a
20 small conglomerate, not a big one, but a small
21 conglomerate of companies that they control and that
22 they can help. But where's the little guy?

23 I'm a veteran. I'm not doing real
24 great, but I'm not doing real bad either, but there
25 are other people. Like the lady before me talked

1 about her costs being offset here and there.
2 Nickels and dimes, you may not even think about it.
3 I think about it. I look at my credit card bill
4 every day to see where it's at. I limit -- I have
5 to limit what I can expend. If I spend too much on
6 gas, I have to cut back somewhere else. If I spend
7 too much on electric, I have to cut back somewhere
8 else.

9 Fortunately being, how do I put it, low
10 income, the VA has supplemented my medical, my
11 pills, going to them for whatever I need.
12 Otherwise, I could not afford a doctor that would
13 charge me what the VA would have to charge me, or
14 the 15 different pills I take a day because of my
15 diabetes, neuropathy, blood pressure, old age,
16 cholesterol. I'm getting near the end of my life
17 and what happens here today may not affect me too
18 much, but it's not that. I'm thinking about my
19 grandkids and great-grandkids, people that I don't
20 even know.

21 I go every month to the store and I buy
22 about 15, \$20 worth of groceries and take it to my
23 church. I'm no hero on doing that, but I pass
24 forward whatever I can to someone else in need. And
25 when I see people up here in need, it kind of tears

1 me up inside because I fought hard for this country
2 to be able to stand here and to listen to them. And
3 I hope you take that to heart because I'm not saying
4 I oppose an increase. I oppose whatever is unfair
5 to the little people. The little people is what
6 makes this country what it is today. I don't -- I'm
7 just a little ant.

8 I'm sorry I'm getting emotional, but
9 life is too short for some people and not long
10 enough for others, and that is something you can
11 take to heart and think about. I know you're all a
12 family, you all got children, cousins, brothers,
13 sister, whatever at different age groups, and I know
14 a company has to make profit, but I'm wondering if
15 10 percent is a little bit more after they acquired
16 and bought four other companies to make this here
17 name change, which I call Ameren still UE, I'm
18 sorry, and they've been Ameren for a long time.

19 So, that's about all I had to say, and I
20 thank you for listening to me.

21 JUDGE DIPPELL: Thank you, sir. And
22 thank you for your service.

23 COMMISSIONER STOLL: Thank you for your
24 testimony.

25 COMMISSIONER COLEMAN: Thank you,

1 Mr. Jones.

2 JUDGE DIPPELL: Thank you very much.

3 Charles Aebel.

4 MR. AEBEL: I'm a little shorter than
5 the big guy.

6 CHARLES AEBEL,
7 being first duly sworn, testified under oath as
8 follows:

9 JUDGE DIPPELL: Could you state your
10 name and spell it, please.

11 MR. AEBEL: My name is Charles Aebel.
12 The last is spelled A-E-B-E-L.

13 JUDGE DIPPELL: Thank you. Go ahead
14 with your comments.

15 MR. AEBEL: Well, first, on a very
16 timely basis I get my monthly bill from Spire and it
17 always touches me off to see that I used \$3.35 for
18 the gas, but I've got this customer charge in there
19 for \$19.50. So, that in connection with the notice
20 of this hearing made me go and start doing some
21 research. I went to the SEC's website and I looked
22 at the company's most recent 10-K filing for 2016.
23 Nothing in there that I saw shows that the company
24 at least on general terms deserves a rate hike.
25 They continue to be profitable in all of the last

1 three years, both on the Laclede Gas level and on a
2 consolidated level. I realize the consolidated
3 level doesn't apply, but I looked at it as well.

4 Then I began to dig for things that
5 would be in that \$19.50 to understand what I'm
6 paying for. The only thing that really stuck out at
7 me was the company's pension and post-retirement
8 benefit costs. They really are massive. This
9 company has a noncontributory defined benefit
10 pension plan, the type that people have been
11 canceling for years because they're so very
12 expensive. Most companies, including the company
13 that I used to work for, froze that type of a plan
14 and instituted a 401(k) plan to still provide a
15 retirement benefit for their employees, but to lower
16 the cost. This company only didn't freeze their
17 plan, but they added the 401(k) plan and they still
18 have an antique, I think, in form of post-retirement
19 benefits for both life insurance and certain medical
20 costs.

21 So, I start -- what I did is I used a
22 number that's disclosed in their financial filing,
23 which was the average annual customer account for
24 Laclede Gas and used that to try to calculate, and
25 what I calculated was that at least \$2.40 of the

1 \$19.50 customer charge or approximately 12 percent
2 is all based on that pension and post-retirement
3 benefit stuff, and then when you read further, you
4 find that's not all of it. That's just the piece
5 that the Commission has allowed, apparently, to be
6 included in rates. The actual pension cost is quite
7 a bit more than that, and the piece that isn't
8 included in rates is somehow miraculously showing up
9 on the company's balance sheet as an asset, I'm
10 trying to think of what it's called, a regulatory
11 asset. I'm a retired accountant. This is pretty
12 confusing stuff just for me.

13 So, all that combined with the fact
14 that, in my opinion, the company's mode of
15 operation, changing their name, acquiring other
16 businesses, they seem to be primarily focused on a
17 Wall Street attitude of growth and a lot less
18 necessarily on the customer base that they have
19 either here or anywhere else. So, just my thoughts.

20 JUDGE DIPPELL: Thank you, sir. Thank
21 you very much.

22 COMMISSIONER STOLL: Thank you for your
23 testimony.

24 COMMISSIONER COLEMAN: Thank you, sir.

25 JUDGE DIPPELL: Ron Londe.

1 RONALD LONDE,
2 being first duly sworn, testified under oath as
3 follows:

4 JUDGE DIPPELL: Thank you. If you could
5 state your name and spell it.

6 MR. LONDE: It's Ronald Londe. Ronald,
7 R-O-N-A-L-D. Londe, L-O-N-D-E.

8 Thank you. I would like to read
9 something into the record for the Commission to make
10 sure that they don't miss this. You might already
11 know this, but this is from the December 16th
12 financial report year-end results for CorEnergy
13 Infrastructure, Inc., dated March 1st, 2017, in
14 their financial report. It's under the paragraph
15 entitled MoGas Pipeline. It says, "Effective
16 March 1st, 2017, the CorEnergy wholly owned
17 subsidiary MoGas Pipeline, LLC, successfully amended
18 and extended its firm transportation service
19 agreement with Laclede Gas, which currently accounts
20 for 56 percent of MoGas revenue. The agreement
21 extends the termination date from October 31st,
22 2017, to October 31st, 2030, and Laclede Gas will
23 continue to hold 62,800 dekatherms per day of firm
24 transportation capacity on MoGas. This service will
25 continue at the full tier rate of \$12.38.5 per

1 dekatherm per month until October 31st, 2018. At
2 which time the rate will be reduced to \$6.38.6 per
3 dekatherm for the remainder of the agreement
4 resulting in a \$4.5 million reduction in annual
5 revenue."

6 I just wanted to make sure that the
7 Commission knows that Laclede Gas will be saving
8 \$4.5 million from this change in tariffs on a
9 significant amount of gas they get from this
10 pipeline that services our community.

11 That's all I have to say.

12 JUDGE DIPPELL: Thank you, sir.

13 Commissioner Coleman?

14 COMMISSIONER COLEMAN: Sir, did you say
15 the name of the report was CorEnergy?

16 MR. LONDE: CorEnergy Infrastructure
17 Trust, Inc.

18 COMMISSIONER COLEMAN: Thank you.

19 JUDGE DIPPELL: Mr. Zucker, you had a
20 question?

21 MR. ZUCKER: If the Commissioner is
22 done.

23 JUDGE DIPPELL: I'm sorry.

24 Commissioner, were you finished?

25 COMMISSIONER COLEMAN: I am finished.

1 Thank you, Mr. Zucker.

2 JUDGE DIPPELL: Mr. Zucker.

3 MR. ZUCKER: Good afternoon, Mr. Londe.

4 You pointed out that the reduced contract with MoGas
5 will save 4 1/2 million dollars a year, correct?

6 MR. LONDE: I assume since their revenue
7 is going to reduce the 4 1/2 million, that that
8 means you will save 4 1/2 million dollars per year
9 starting about a year from now.

10 MR. ZUCKER: I think that's a good
11 assumption. And this contract goes through 2030?

12 MR. LONDE: 30.

13 MR. ZUCKER: And so, that's 12 years at
14 4 1/2 million a year. Would that be correct?

15 MR. LONDE: Correct.

16 MR. ZUCKER: So, that's about
17 \$54 million, something like that?

18 MR. LONDE: That's right. That should
19 be good for your customers, for us.

20 MR. ZUCKER: And would you like us to
21 share that with our customers?

22 MR. LONDE: I would.

23 MR. ZUCKER: Would you like us to share
24 all of it with our customers?

25 MR. LONDE: I would.

1 MR. ZUCKER: Okay. You got it.

2 MR. LONDE: Thank you.

3 JUDGE DIPPELL: Thank you, sir.

4 Annette Rey.

5 ANNETTE REY,

6 being first duly sworn, testified under oath as
7 follows:

8 JUDGE DIPPELL: Could you, please, spell
9 your name for the court reporter.

10 MS. REY: It's A-N-N-E-T-T-E. Last name
11 is Rey, R-E-Y.

12 JUDGE DIPPELL: Go ahead.

13 MS. REY: I have come today because I
14 believe citizens should exercise their voices and
15 give their opinions and attitudes on large
16 corporations, monopolies, bureaucracies that are
17 abusing the common person. We've had many people
18 here who are very intelligent, they've done
19 research, they've made great comments and
20 revelations to the rest of us in the room, and
21 hopefully here up on the board that you will take
22 some action in our favor.

23 I also think that the format could be
24 somewhat changed. This is a miniscule amount of
25 people who are showing up. I understand you have

1 other meetings, but before you came in the room
2 there's not enough time for everybody to have the
3 floor and to say their peace. The attorney over
4 here squelched a woman who has testified at a
5 different meeting. That is wrong. She had the
6 floor. She had the right to speak. That's just one
7 point. So, you should have longer hearings for
8 people. What if a whole bunch of other people
9 showed up at these meetings. You'd have to lengthen
10 them.

11 Before you came into the room, that same
12 woman asked a question about the CEO's salary and
13 someone spoke up. The attorney could not answer
14 that. Oh, he apologized, I'm sorry. You should
15 come here prepared. You know that that's on the
16 hearts of the citizens. They've asked this question
17 before at other hearings. I've attended the UE
18 hearings. Same story. It's a shell game. Oh, I
19 don't know that answer. The people don't believe
20 that. And another man made that same comment.
21 "Well, you should come prepared." And this is a
22 common issue.

23 Someone in the crowd said that they had
24 seen on Yahoo! that the CEO's salary is 1.7 million,
25 1.7 million. Whether that's verifiable or not,

1 let's use that as a figure. It's probably close to
2 accurate.

3 There was a -- I'm going to jump a
4 little bit. There was a woman in here who said that
5 when she read that paper that the bill was going to
6 go up something like \$3 a month. She said, well,
7 that's misleading because in her case, she did the
8 math, she did the averaging of the figures, and it
9 was going to be \$5 a month. Okay. That might not
10 sound like a lot to a lot of people, but that's \$60
11 a year. If you would take that CEO's salary of a
12 million dollars away from her -- I think it's a
13 female, right? -- and give her \$700,000 as a
14 salary, which I don't think anybody can justify.
15 Unless you own your own business and, and your
16 company agrees with you, your employees agree with
17 you and you're treating them fairly and you make
18 \$700,000 a year. Take that CEO's \$1 million, divide
19 that \$60, which is what I did, and you could pay
20 that increase for 16,666 households. And this is
21 what the average citizen is coming forward to speak
22 to you people about and to be heard.

23 I did not like that this woman was
24 squelched just because she had spoken at another
25 hearing. She had intelligent and pressing questions

1 and he was cornered and he didn't want to answer
2 them and he asked her to remove herself from the
3 floor so he could talk to some other people. Wrong.
4 I'm sorry. We came here to have the floor. We
5 wanted to be educated by our other citizens who had
6 factual knowledge. I did not have -- I was enjoying
7 what she was saying. I wanted to hear her answers.
8 They were intelligent questions.

9 So, in, in conclusion, I do not agree
10 with this raising. We are not horns of plenty.
11 We're at five minutes. I'm sorry.

12 JUDGE DIPPELL: One minute.

13 MS. REY: Oh, I didn't mean to take that
14 much time.

15 But we are not horns of plenty, and I do
16 not understand the mentality of these bureaucracies,
17 monopolies. Where do you think we're getting this
18 money from? I'm 68 years old. I'm still working
19 because I want to have a little bit better quality
20 of life, and I do not even collect Social Security
21 because I'm wanting that to accrue. It supposedly
22 accrues 8 percent more a year every year you delay
23 until age 70. That's my plan. Will that happen?
24 I'm not even sure the government's going to honor
25 that.

1 So, I'm just resting this. You need to
2 increase the timing for this. Like I said, what if
3 a whole lot more people show up? You've got to make
4 the floor for these people. That happened before
5 you were in the room.

6 JUDGE DIPPELL: Thank you for your
7 comments. And I will tell you, ma'am, that we do
8 take comments about the format and everything, and
9 each time we set local public hearings we kind of
10 reevaluate and --

11 MS. REY: I appreciate that.

12 JUDGE DIPPELL: -- try to come up with
13 the best system. Right now this is --

14 MS. REY: I appreciate that. I think --
15 I think people on this panel are sincere. I don't
16 trust the monopolies, and you're citizens, too, and
17 you probably don't either. Thank you.

18 COMMISSIONER STOLL: Thank you for your
19 time.

20 JUDGE DIPPELL: Mr. Zucker wanted to ask
21 a question.

22 MR. ZUCKER: I just want to clarify.
23 Did that lady that you're talking about have a
24 chance to ask a few questions?

25 MS. REY: Yes, she did and --

1 MR. ZUCKER: And then -- thank you. And
2 then did I say to her let's let other people have
3 first before you get seconds because you were here
4 at an earlier hearing?

5 MS. REY: Yes. And I still disagree
6 with that. She had the floor. She had the right to
7 speak. You shouldn't cut her off to speak to
8 somebody else, and she's a citizen who has a right
9 to go to as many meetings as she wants and to have
10 her say.

11 MR. ZUCKER: And did I offer --

12 JUDGE DIPPELL: Mr. Zucker, we --

13 MR. ZUCKER: Let it go?

14 JUDGE DIPPELL: Yeah. We don't need to
15 get into that.

16 MS. REY: Well, he offered extra time
17 for her after the fact, but that means I wouldn't
18 have heard what she had to say or the answers. So,
19 that was also unfair.

20 JUDGE DIPPELL: Okay. Thank you.

21 MR. ZUCKER: No further questions.
22 Thank you.

23 COMMISSIONER STOLL: Thank you.

24 JUDGE DIPPELL: Cara Spencer.

25

1 CARA SPENCER,
2 being first duly sworn, testified under oath as
3 follows:

4 JUDGE DIPPELL: Could you, please, spell
5 your name for the court reporter.

6 MS. SPENCER: Sure. Cara Spencer,
7 C-A-R-A S-P-E-N-C-E-R.

8 JUDGE DIPPELL: You can go ahead with
9 your comment.

10 MS. SPENCER: Thank you.

11 My name is Cara Spencer. I am the
12 executive director of a consumer organization, The
13 Consumers Council of Missouri. I also serve as a
14 city alderman representing the 20th Ward in the City
15 of St. Louis.

16 I want to first thank the Commission for
17 this opportunity to speak to you today. It's
18 impressive that we have the majority of the
19 Commission before us. Thank you for your service
20 here to the citizens of Missouri. I know that the
21 Public Service Commission here in our state really
22 serves the people of the State of Missouri very
23 well, especially when compared to our surrounding
24 states. The work you do is very important to our
25 citizenry and transparency and good governance and

1 regulating our utilities here. So, thank you very
2 much. Your service is very important to us.

3 The Consumers Council of Missouri is an
4 active intervenor, as you know, in this case and we
5 also have an expert witness testimony that's
6 submitted. I'm only here today to provide public
7 testimony. We have facilitated additional comments
8 from our membership and from many people throughout
9 the State of Missouri who, despite the many hearings
10 that you're hosting, were unable to be here today.
11 So, I'd like to ask, we have input from several
12 hundred people that have submitted comments through
13 us, that the Commission take that as the Commission
14 has done in previous hearings and previous cases.
15 If I could do that, I could just hand them over to
16 you.

17 JUDGE DIPPELL: Certainly we can enter
18 those as public comments.

19 MS. SPENCER: Sure. Thank you.

20 And so, I don't want to belabor too
21 much, but in this we have heard from a lot of your
22 constituents, a lot of folks across the state who
23 have weighed in that they don't want to see a rate
24 increase, but particularly troublesome to many of
25 the folks we've heard from is this fixed fee. The

1 fixed fee of \$20 is something that especially folks
2 of low income, fixed income, seniors are unable to
3 adjust. They cannot adjust usage to affect the
4 fixed charge. It is a considerable fixed charge at
5 \$20, almost double the rate of fixed fees on our
6 electricity bills, and it is something that we find,
7 as a consumer organization, to be outrageous quite
8 frankly. We're looking to hope to see that fixed
9 fee reduced to something along the lines of \$15 or
10 lower so that folks on fixed income can affect a
11 larger percentage of their bill through usage.

12 We also commend your own Staff, the
13 Staff of the Public Service Commission, the audit to
14 really speak to reduction in costs -- excuse me, a
15 reduction in rates. We applaud that and applaud the
16 work of the Office of Public Counsel and we would
17 like to support that.

18 So, in closing, again, thank you very
19 much for your service. With the amount of hearings
20 that we're seeing here on this case is very
21 impressive and we're very grateful for the
22 opportunity to weigh in.

23 JUDGE DIPPELL: Thank you. If you want
24 to just hand those over to the court reporter and
25 I'll get them from her.

1 COMMISSIONER STOLL: Thank you for your
2 testimony.

3 JUDGE DIPPELL: Dr. Seymour Fox.

4 SEYMOUR FOX,
5 being first duly sworn, testified under oath as
6 follows:

7 MR. FOX: My name is S-E-Y-M-O-U-R.
8 Last name is Fox, F-O-X.

9 JUDGE DIPPELL: Go ahead with your
10 comments.

11 MR. FOX: I'm here today to share with
12 members of the PSC and representatives of the gas
13 company a recent frustrating and extended episode
14 involving the charges. To start in the beginning,
15 the bill I received in August was for July's gas
16 consumption and it was 95 percent higher than the
17 bill in June. Now, I know that to be an
18 impossibility. Not an improbability, an
19 impossibility. My wife and I have been married for
20 27 years. We have a set routine and there's no way
21 we used twice as much gas in July as we did in June.

22 So, the bill came the first week in
23 August. I called Laclede and the woman I spoke to
24 was indifferent to the issue. She would send
25 someone out in a day or two to check the meter and

1 if there was a problem, they'd contact me. Didn't
2 hear anything in August. Got my bill in September.
3 It was lower than the one in August, but, again, it
4 didn't reflect any reduction in price. Called
5 again, got the same indifferent response from the
6 customer service individual. I asked to speak to a
7 supervisor, got the same response from that person,
8 but they agreed to send out a tech to look at the
9 meter and I said I wanted to be there.

10 Well, they sent out two people and I
11 since all this started -- I got a doctorate in
12 computer science. I've been working in IT for 50
13 years. I have enough brain cells to learn how the
14 gas distribution system works, how a two diaphragm
15 meter works and I knew what questions to ask these
16 individuals when they showed up. Well, their eyes
17 went everywhere, went away, but they didn't answer
18 any of the questions I wanted answered.

19 So, it took a call to the Public Service
20 Commission and within a couple days I got a call
21 from whoever the liaison is in the gas company
22 saying she was going to look into my situation and
23 get back to me. About a week later, it was last
24 Thursday as a matter of fact, she called and said
25 they found a glitch in their automatic meter reading

1 system on July 4th and that was all she told me.
2 She said there would be a credit of \$17 and so on
3 and so forth. The same individual from PSC called
4 me the following day saying that they found a
5 problem with the automatic reading system and they
6 sent someone out on the 28th of July probably to
7 read the meter because the readings up to that point
8 had been bogus at best, and I asked, well, I'm not
9 satisfied.

10 I know enough about microwave
11 transmission and I know enough about a system that
12 has two inputs. You have an analog system and you
13 have a digital system, both recording information,
14 and they get out of sync rather frequently depending
15 on atmospheric conditions. Signals from the meter
16 to wherever the information gets sent can be
17 garbled. The billing process that Laclede Gas/Spire
18 uses is at best suspect in terms of its ability to
19 function fairly, with veracity for all its
20 consumers. I could not find any information online
21 that describes the process by which they go through.
22 In fact, I even read the original Cellnet contract
23 going back to 2002 last night trying to figure out
24 what was going on there. It's a private network and
25 unless the protocol is made available, you have an

1 error rate there of anywhere between 2 and
2 10 percent. The individual that came to my house
3 today to replace my meter components had three to
4 replace in a 62-unit community. Now, if you're
5 talking about billing errors of 10 percent over
6 600,000 people, Laclede Gas is certainly helping
7 their, their stockholders quite well.

8 There is no incentive for Laclede to
9 want to correct overcharges. I learned that from
10 speaking to the people over there. They can,
11 according to the statutes, collect undercharges when
12 they finally figure it out when they change the
13 meter, but there's no reason to change the meter.
14 They don't change the meter.

15 So, I asked a representative from your
16 organization whether it's appropriate to write a
17 letter to the Attorney General. They said you're
18 going to waste your time because they're just going
19 to send it to us. Well, your customer service
20 people are indifferent to how they're billing also.
21 They feel that according to statute, which I've read
22 and they don't talk anywhere in there about how
23 Laclede goes about billing their customers, and
24 until one knows for certain what percentage of the
25 population is being overcharged on a regular basis,

1 there's something here that ought to be
2 investigated. Now, I don't know where I'm supposed
3 to go at this point. I have a few ideas, but I'm
4 not going to let this die because this is not right.
5 It's no different than any other loosely regulated
6 utility that can do whatever the hell they want,
7 excuse me, whatever they want and get away with it
8 impunity because there's no oversight.

9 JUDGE DIPPELL: We appreciate your
10 comments, sir.

11 MR. FOX: Thank you.

12 JUDGE DIPPELL: We will definitely --

13 MR. FOX: You have questions?

14 JUDGE DIPPELL: I'm certain that
15 everyone is listening.

16 I'm down to Ms. Nelson, but Ms. Wells
17 was on here before. So, I'm going to go ahead and
18 ask her to come on up, Ms. Wells.

19 And I will state that your comments from
20 yesterday are in the record.

21 MS. WELLS: The day before.

22 JUDGE DIPPELL: So, we appreciate -- oh,
23 the day before. I'm sorry. Tuesday are in the
24 record. So, if you have something to add, we'd love
25 to hear it.

1 MS. WELLS: The comments I have are
2 basically the same, but I will do the oath and then
3 I will address that.

4 JUDGE DIPPELL: All right.

5 SHARON WELLS,
6 being first duly sworn, testified under oath as
7 follows:

8 JUDGE DIPPELL: Thank you.

9 MS. WELLS: Sharon Wells. S-H-A-R-O-N
10 W-E-L-L-S.

11 JUDGE DIPPELL: Go ahead.

12 MS. WELLS: Thank you for allowing me to
13 come back and address the issues that I'm
14 representing AARP on behalf of. Four points that I
15 would like to reiterate that I have made before and
16 actually have been covered earlier today, but I
17 think it's important to emphasize them.

18 And the first one is that your
19 Commission has actually suggested an overall
20 decrease in the amount that customers would pay, the
21 administrative costs that have been reduced across
22 the entire system by the purchase of the Spire
23 consolidation, and the fixed customer service
24 charges are incredibly high, often forcing lower
25 income members to pay high bills even when they

1 aren't using much gas. And my fourth point is:
2 Older Missourians are having a difficult enough time
3 affording basic necessities on a fixed income.
4 Unnecessary gas rates only make the problems worse.

5 I appreciate the time that you are
6 giving the public today to speak and I hope that you
7 will sincerely take all of the comments that are
8 being made seriously and with careful consideration.
9 Thank you very much.

10 JUDGE DIPPELL: Thank you, Ms. Wells.

11 COMMISSIONER STOLL: Thank you for your
12 testimony.

13 JUDGE DIPPELL: Ms. Nelson.

14 MS. NELSON: Thank you for allowing me
15 to speak again.

16 PEGGY NELSON,
17 being first duly sworn, testified under oath as
18 follows:

19 JUDGE DIPPELL: Go ahead.

20 MS. NELSON: My name is Peggy Nelson.
21 Do I need to spell my name?

22 JUDGE DIPPELL: Go ahead.

23 MS. NELSON: P-E-G-G-Y N-E-L-S-O-N.

24 Today I wanted to not keep going over
25 the same issues, but add to them. I know I wanted

1 to speak for a couple of other people that are not
2 here. No. Okay. Victor Northern was a customer,
3 he said that he could not pay his gas bill. So, he
4 quit using his gas to try and catch up. He had a
5 fireplace. So, he was using wood to heat his home,
6 burning wood, and he continued to be billed a
7 budget, an amount according to an estimated amount.
8 It wasn't an actual amount. So, he had a problem
9 with that.

10 I also wanted to speak for Robert
11 Bergel, B-E-R-G-E-L. He received a pension and
12 whenever he gets an increase, the utilities go up
13 and he has nothing left. So, something needs to
14 help him. He doesn't qualify because it's not
15 Social Security. Because he's getting a pension, he
16 can't get the other assistance that some people get
17 once they retire.

18 Some things that to improve your home,
19 nothing is mentioned of Step, Inc. They can for
20 free -- I'm not sure who pays for that. I don't
21 know if it's a government assisted program, but they
22 will insulate your home, put new doors up, caulk
23 your windows and make improvements to your home to
24 make your home more energy efficient. However, some
25 homes are in such poor condition that it's no

1 different as having a hole in the wall because the
2 home is in such poor condition. Other options for
3 some of these elderly people that are on a fixed
4 income and cannot work anymore due to health
5 restrictions and just physical inability due to age.
6 So, someone needs to say things like that to help
7 them and I hear no mention of that. Then there's
8 the Dollar Help and budget billing. Nothing has
9 been said about there are posters in front that they
10 can look for.

11 I had brought up the last hearing that
12 some things are cheaper now than they used to be,
13 and I was reminiscing about that Steak 'n Shake is a
14 place you can eat for 3.99 and they have several
15 meals for less money. You can buy a blower to clean
16 up lawn debris. It used to be \$50. Now you can get
17 one from Menards, the average price is 14.99.
18 Technology costs are a lot cheaper. Computers used
19 to be very expensive and bulky. Now a laptop you
20 can get one for about 125 to \$150. Telephone used
21 to be really expensive. When I bought my phone from
22 Southwestern Bell Telephone Company, it had a phone
23 there on the side, a chalkboard in the front and a
24 place for your telephone book. Well, I paid \$150
25 for that. When they split up, I still had to pay

1 for the works inside that did not belong to me.
2 They're telling me I still had to pay more. Now you
3 can purchase a phone with upgrades. Telephones,
4 before you had to stand there. You couldn't leave
5 your phone. Now you can take your phone anywhere
6 you go. You don't need a landline unless you want a
7 fax hookup. Now you can purchase a phone for \$60
8 that has a camera. There are cheaper phones. There
9 are prepaid phones. Handheld calculators are
10 cheaper. Cable is cheaper. I'm unsure if it's
11 Spire or something. The guy on the commercial with
12 tattoos, it costs \$20 for cable now. Everybody else
13 is charging more. For our costs to keep increasing,
14 especially for utilities for a profit, projected
15 profit of 10.35 percent, that's too high for a
16 utility.

17 Are you cutting me off?

18 JUDGE DIPPELL: No. Just one more
19 minute.

20 MS. NELSON: Okay. Annette Rey was
21 addressing how -- well, I wanted to say more people
22 are here than were at the last hearing and I was
23 glad to see that and a lot of them were elderly.
24 But she had addressed the fact that I was pretty
25 much cut off with I don't know or talking over me

1 and pretty much to quiet me.

2 Other things that could be used other
3 than gas, natural gas, burning wood for in a
4 fireplace for heating, propane or electric. You
5 have to have some knowledge of how to safely use
6 those, the propane or burning wood. Electric would
7 probably be more expensive because you have
8 continuous hookup and which is convenient as natural
9 gas is continuous hookup. Solar energy to heat your
10 water does not work and I hope that no one buys that
11 until somebody figures out how to make it work. The
12 only way to gain free heating from the sun is to
13 open and close your windows, curtains at the proper
14 times of day. Let the heat in during the day from
15 10:00 to 2:00 or whenever the sun falls, and in the
16 summertime keep your shades closed, shades and
17 drapes closed during the high heat times of day, use
18 an attic fan at night to draw in the cool air to
19 cool your home in the summer. As sometimes in
20 spring and fall that can be used to bring heat in
21 when it's warmer in the day because when the
22 temperature -- when the sun falls, the temperatures
23 plummet around here. Nobody offers these
24 suggestions at these meetings to help these people.

25 In the Office of Public Counsel, it's

1 stated in the fourth paragraph that OPC also opposes
2 certain charges requested by the company, including
3 their request for a high 10.35 percent profit margin
4 on all plant investments. Well, it's just
5 ridiculous to keep expecting people, everybody to
6 have to pay the same amount. It's clear that some
7 of these people need government assistance, and they
8 don't seem to care. They just want to keep charging
9 and it's just not fair. And just like being cut off
10 when you're trying to speak and someone's drowning
11 you out or interjecting when you're testifying or
12 not being able to finish saying what you want to say
13 to stop you from expounding on a point.

14 So, I think that was all that I wanted
15 to add to my prior testimony.

16 JUDGE DIPPELL: Okay. Commissioner
17 Coleman, you had something you wanted to say?

18 COMMISSIONER COLEMAN: I do.

19 Thank you, Ms. Nelson, for your
20 testimony today and for Harris Stowe last night. I
21 just wanted to make sure that I hadn't missed your
22 affiliation. Are you here testifying on behalf of
23 yourself or for an organization?

24 MS. NELSON: For myself, and today I had
25 talked to a couple of other people and they have

1 problems. The man, Victor Northern, he was having a
2 problem with his bill. He could not pay. So, he
3 heated his home by burning wood in his fireplace.

4 COMMISSIONER COLEMAN: Yes.

5 MS. NELSON: And the projected estimate
6 was still what they were charging him instead of the
7 actual use. So, I don't know what they're doing
8 with the budget system, whether they stop it or you
9 have to wait until a certain date to stop the budget
10 billing.

11 The other man was --

12 COMMISSIONER COLEMAN: And I've got that
13 also. I got that. I just wanted to make sure.
14 Some people have informed us that they are, you
15 know, here on behalf of AARP --

16 MS. NELSON: No.

17 COMMISSIONER COLEMAN: -- or different
18 organizations. So, I just wanted to double-check,
19 and I sure appreciate your information.

20 MS. NELSON: I got your letter. It was
21 notice of local public hearing, request for comments
22 regarding proposed increase. And again, I'm here to
23 ask you to throw the case out and deny them the
24 increase --

25 COMMISSIONER COLEMAN: Thank you.

1 MS. NELSON: -- because it's just
2 unreasonable. They have profit.

3 COMMISSIONER COLEMAN: Thank you for
4 coming. We appreciate it. Hold on just in case.

5 JUDGE DIPPELL: Is there any other?

6 COMMISSIONER STOLL: No questions.
7 Thank you for your testimony.

8 JUDGE DIPPELL: All right.

9 COMMISSIONER COLEMAN: Thank you.

10 JUDGE DIPPELL: Was there anyone else
11 who didn't sign up that would like to comment?

12 All right. Well, I do -- and I do
13 appreciate all of you being here. I know that it's
14 in the middle of the day and it takes time away from
15 other things, but the comments are important to the
16 Commission. It's part of a whole process so they
17 can get the whole picture, and certainly things were
18 brought up that, you know, the Commission isn't
19 aware of until they have a chance to go out and hear
20 from you.

21 So, with that, I appreciate you being
22 here, safe travels to your homes, and we will go off
23 the record.

24 (The hearing adjourned at 2:18 p.m.)

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CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER

I, Amanda N. Farrar, a Certified Court Reporter for the State of Missouri, do hereby certify that the witnesses whose testimony appears in the foregoing transcript were duly sworn; the testimony of said witnesses was taken by me to the best of my ability and thereafter reduced to typewriting by me; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which this hearing was taken, and further that I am not a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties thereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of the action.

Amanda Farrar

Certified Court Reporter

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