Exhibit No.: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Issue(s): Payroll/ Incentive Compensation/ Pensions and OPEBs Expense Witness/Type of Exhibit: Roth/Rebuttal Sponsoring Party: Public Counsel Case No.: GR-2018-0013

# **REBUTTAL TESTIMONY**

# OF

# **KERI ROTH**

Submitted on Behalf of the Office of the Public Counsel

# LIBERTY UTILITIES (MIDSTATES NATURAL GAS) CORP. D/B/A LIBERTY UTILITIES'

FILE NO. GR-2018-0013

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Denotes Confidential Information that has been redacted

April 13, 2018

# PUBLIC VERSION

# BEFORE THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF MISSOURI

)

In the Matter of Liberty Utilities (Midstates Natural Gas) Corp. d/b/a Liberty Utilities' Tariff Revisions Designed ) to Implement a General Rate Increase for Natural Gas Service in the Missouri Service ) Areas of the Company )

File No. GR-2018-0013

## AFFIDAVIT OF KERI ROTH

# STATE OF MISSOURI **COUNTY OF COLE** )

Keri Roth, of lawful age and being first duly sworn, deposes and states:

SS

1. My name is Keri Roth. I am a Public Utility Accountant III for the Office of the Public Counsel.

2. Attached hereto and made a part hereof for all purposes is my rebuttal testimony.

3. I hereby swear and affirm that my statements contained in the attached testimony are true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Keri/Roth

Public Utility Accountant III

Subscribed and sworn to me this 13th day of April 2018.



JERENE A. BUCKMAN My Commission Expires August 23, 2021 Cole County Commission #13754037

Jerene A. Buckman Notary Public

My Commission expires August 23, 2021.

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# **REBUTTAL TESTIMONY**

## OF

# **KERI ROTH**

# LIBERTY UTILITIES (MIDSTATES NATURAL GAS) CORP. D/B/A LIBERTY UTILITIES

## CASE NO. GR-2018-0013

# 1 I. INTRODUCTION

- 2 **Q.** Please state your name and business address.
- A. Keri Roth, P.O. Box 2230, Jefferson City, Missouri 65102-2230.

# 4 Q. By whom are you employed and in what capacity?

- A. I am employed by the Missouri Office of the Public Counsel ("OPC") as a Public Utility
  Accountant III.
- 7 **Q.** On whose behalf are you testifying?

8 A. I am testifying on behalf of the OPC.

9 Q. What is the nature of your duties at the OPC?

A. My duties include performing audits and examinations of the books and records of public
 utilities operating within the state of Missouri. I specialize in the area of auditing water and
 sewer utility companies, and also have performed audits in electric and gas cases. I have
 performed audits or accounting analysis in acquisition cases, complaint cases, and rate cases.

- 14 **Q.** Please describe your educational background.
- A. I graduated in May 2011 from Lincoln University in Jefferson City with a Bachelor of Science
   Degree in Accounting.

### 1 Have you received specialized training related to public utility accounting? Q. 2 A. Yes. In addition to being employed by the OPC since September 2012, I have also attended 3 the NARUC Utility Rate School held by Michigan State University. Q. Have you previously filed testimony before the Missouri Public Service Commission 4 5 ("Commission" or "PSC")? Yes. Please refer to Schedule KNR-R-1, attached to this testimony, for a listing of cases in б A. 7 which I have submitted testimony. 8 Q. What is the purpose of your rebuttal testimony? 9 The purpose of my rebuttal testimony is to respond to the direct testimony of Liberty Utilities A. (Midstates Natural Gas) Corp. d/b/a Liberty Utilities ("Liberty Utilities" or "Company") 10 witness Mr. Charlie Evans regarding vacant payroll positions and wage increases, and Mr. 11 Jeffery P. Lee regarding pension and other post-employment benefits ("OPEBs") expense. I 12 13 will also respond to Missouri Public Service Commission Staff ("Staff") witness Lisa M. Ferguson regarding incentive compensation. 14 II. PAYROLL 15 VACANT POSITIONS 16 a. Has Liberty Utilities included vacant positions in its annual level of payroll? 17 **O**. 18 A. Yes. Liberty Utilities witness, Mr. Evans, explains in his direct testimony that Liberty Utilities has included costs associated with three positions that were vacant during the test year. 19 20 Liberty Utilities has included estimated costs related to wages, benefits and payroll taxes

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associated with these positions and has included an adjustment for the capitalized portion of the labor costs.<sup>1</sup>

# Q. Has Staff included vacant positions in its annual level of payroll?

A. No. Staff witness, Mr. Asad A. Shakoor, states in the Staff Cost of Service Report that Staff has annualized payroll expense for the test year ending June 30, 2017, and has included all known and measureable changes through the December 31, 2017, update period.<sup>2</sup>
Additionally, OPC issued a data request to Staff verifying Staff's exclusion of vacant positions, in which Staff responded that vacant positions have not been included in the calculation. Please see Staff's response to OPC data request 333 attached as Schedule KNR-R-2.

# 11Q.Does OPC support the use of actual employee levels that existed as of the update period12and/or true-up period in this case to calculate an annualized level of payroll?

A. Yes. Only positions actually filled as of the update period and/or true-up period in this case
should be included in Liberty Utilities' cost of service. Customers should not be responsible
to pay rates that include unfilled positions. Also, as mentioned previously, Mr. Evans states
that the costs associated with the vacant positions are estimated costs. This means the costs
are not known and measureable and therefore violate the known and measureable standard
utilized by the Commission.

19 b. EMPLOYEE WAGE INCREASES

20 21 Q. Has Liberty Utilities included estimated wage increases for non-union employees to calculate an annualized level of payroll as of December 31, 2017, the update period?

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Liberty Utilities witness, Mr. Charlie Evans, direct testimony, page 5, lines 17 - 22

 $<sup>^2</sup>$  Staff Direct Cost of Service Report, page 61, lines 10 - 12

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#### Yes. Mr. Evans states in his direct testimony that non-union employees receive varying merit A. 2 increases. Therefore, Liberty Utilities has made an adjustment to reflect a 5.2% increase, 3 which represents the average anticipated increase for non-union employee wages.<sup>3</sup>

#### 0. Does OPC agree with Liberty Utilities' methodology to utilize an average percentage 4 5 increase to increase wage levels for non-union employees as of the update period in this 6 case?

7 A. No. Using an average percentage increase violates the known and measureable standard which is utilized by the Commission. OPC would support Staff's calculation to make an 8 9 adjustment from test year payroll and include only known and measureable changes through the update period and/or true-up period in this case<sup>4</sup> and include actual employee levels at that 10 period in time. Customers should not be responsible to pay rates that include estimated 11 numbers when actual data is available. 12

#### **Q**. Has Liberty Utilities proposed an update to union employee wages based on a negotiated 13 union contract? 14

Yes. Liberty Utilities has made a further adjustment to include union contracted wages that 15 A. 16 will go into effect June 1, 2018, which is outside of the true-up period in this case.

#### Q. Is OPC agreeable to this adjustment for union contracts? 17

A. While OPC does not typically take the position to include costs outside of the true-up period, 18 19 OPC understands that the union contact has already been negotiated and the costs are known and measureable. In the past, the Commission has typically allowed union contracts outside 20 21 of the test year, because the wages are known and measureable. Additionally, the effective

Liberty Utilities witness, Mr. Charlie Evans, direct testimony, page 5,

lines 3 - 5

Staff Direct Cost of Service Report, page 61, lines 17 - 19

	Case N	lo. GR-2018-0013
1		date of the contract does not extend too far outside of the true-up period in this case of March
2		31, 2018, and including these dollars should not expose ratepayers to a measureable expense.
3	III.	INCENTIVE COMPENSATION
4	Q.	Has Liberty Utilities removed any costs related to incentive compensation from its
5		proposed cost of service?
6	А.	No. It appears that Liberty Utilities has included all incentive compensation in its proposed
7		cost of service.
8	Q.	Has Staff removed any costs related to incentive compensation from is proposed cost of
9		service?
10	А.	Yes. **
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16 17		**
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18	Q.	Does OPC support Staff's position?
19	A.	Yes. OPC has long supported the position to remove any incentive compensation costs
20		associated to the financial performance of the company. It should not be the responsibility of
21		rate payers to cover costs strictly for the financial benefit of Liberty Utilities and its
22		shareholders. Additionally, OPC is supportive of Staff's position to make a further adjustment

5 Staff Direct Cost of Service Report, pages 63 - 66 5

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to remove any incentive compensation costs included in plant and depreciation reserve related to the financial performance of the Company.

# Q. Has the Missouri Public Service Commission ("Commission") traditionally allowed earnings or equity based incentive compensation to be recovered in rates?

A. No. Liberty Utilities argument to allow earnings or equity based incentive compensation to be recovered in rates is a waste of Commission time, as it has been denied by the Commission on a number of occasions. As recent as the general rate case for Spire Missouri Inc., case numbered GR-2017-0215, the Commission clearly cites in its *Report and Order*:

The Commission has a long history of removing earnings based employee compensation from rates. Examples of cases in which the Commission decided against allowing incentive compensation tied to the financial benchmarks include: EC-87-114, Union Electric; TC-89-14, Southwestern Bell; TC-93-224, Southwestern Bell; GR-96-285, Missouri Gas Energy; GR-2004-0209, Missouri Gas Energy; ER-2006-0314, Kansas City Power & Light; and ER-2007-0291, Kansas City Power & Light.<sup>6</sup>

The Commission's Report and Order goes on to explain:

The Commission has traditionally not allowed earnings based or equity based compensation to be recovered in rates because such incentives are primarily for the benefit of shareholders and not for the benefit of the ratepayers. As the Commission has said in the past, incentivizing employees to improve the company's bottom line aligns the employee interest with the shareholders and

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Commission Report and Order, case numbered GR-2017-0215, page 116, paragraph

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not with the ratepayers. Aligning interests in this way can negatively affect ratepayers.<sup>7</sup>

#### IV. PENSION AND OPEBS EXPENSE

## 0. Please describe the agreement between parties regarding pensions and OPEBS described in the approved Partial Stipulation and Agreement as to Certain Issues ("Stipulation") in case numbered GR-2014-0152. 6

7 In the Stipulation, the parties agreed to develop a tracking mechanism to ensure exact recovery A. of pension and OPEBs costs by Liberty Utilities. Any amount recovered in rates that are more 8 than the actual payments would create a regulatory liability and costs would be returned to 9 10 customers. Any amount recovered in rates that are less than the actual payments would create a regulatory asset and would be recovered by Liberty Utilities in a subsequent ratemaking 11 process. The regulatory asset or liability would be included in the Company's rate base in 12 future proceedings and be amortized over 5 years. The amount of pension expense agreed to 13 be included in rates in GR-2014-0152 was \$154,350, and the amount of OPEBs expense 14 agreed to be included in rates was \$474,068.8 15

#### 0. What is Liberty Utilities recommendation regarding pension and OPEBs expense in the 16 17 current case?

Liberty Utilities witness Mr. Lee explains in his direct testimony that the Company is A. 18 requesting an increase of \$66,379 in pension expense and an increase of \$135,014 in OPEBs 19 expense.9 20

Commission Report and Order, case numbered GR-2017-0215, page 119,

<sup>&</sup>quot;Decision"

Case numbered GR-2014-0152, Partial Stipulation and Agreement as to Certain Issues, page 2, paragraph 3

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Liberty Utilities witness Mr. Jeffery P. Lee, direct testimony, page 3, lines 1 - 10

# 1Q.Has Staff made the same recommendation as Liberty Utilities regarding pension and2OPEBs expense?

A. Yes. Staff witness, Mr. James R. Dittmer, explains in the Staff Cost of Service Report that
 Staff's adjustments are identical to those proposed by the Company in its original
 application.<sup>10</sup>

# Q. Are the adjustments proposed by Staff and Liberty Utilities based on actual data or estimates?

A. The adjustments are based on estimates.<sup>11</sup> However, once the 2017 actuarial valuation of the plans is complete, in early 2018, Liberty Utilities will provide this information for final adjustments.<sup>12</sup>

# 11 Q. Does OPC agree with the current adjustments proposed by Liberty Utilities and Staff?

# A. No. It appears the estimated data used to calculate pension expense, provided in Staff data request 74, is slightly different than the estimated data used by Liberty Utilities to calculate its adjustment. However, since these adjustments are based on estimates, OPC will update its position during the true-up period once the 2017 actuarial valuation of the plans are complete. It is OPC's understanding that Staff will do the same.<sup>13</sup>

# Q. Has Liberty Utilities offered testimony as to the balance of a regulatory asset or liability to be included in its rate base for pensions and OPEBs in the current case?

A. No, it does not appear so.

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 $^{\rm 10}$  Staff Direct Cost of Service Report, page 67, lines 8 - 9

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Staff Direct Cost of Service Report, page 66, lines 28 - 29

 $<sup>^{\</sup>rm 12}$  Liberty Utilities witness Mr. Jeffery P. Lee, direct testimony, page 3, lines 16 - 20

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Staff Direct Cost of Service Report, page 67, lines 9 - 11

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# 1 Q. Did Staff write direct testimony on this issue?

A. Yes. In the Staff Cost of Service Report staff witness, Mr. John P. Cassidy, explained that no witness for Liberty Utilities included testimony discussing a regulatory asset or liability amount related to pensions and OPEBs to be reflected in the Company's rate base. If Liberty Utilities plans to seek recognition of the regulatory asset or liability in the current case, Staff requested the information be provided by March 21, 2018.<sup>14</sup>

## 7 **Q.** Did OPC request the same documentation?

A. Yes. OPC submitted data request 1101 to Liberty Utilities on March 21, 2018 requesting the
same documentation and received a response on March 26, 2018.

# 10Q.What has OPC determined based on the documentation provided in response to OPC11data request 1101?

A. As shown in Schedule KNR-R-3, the Liberty Utilities has provided spreadsheets showing the
 difference between contributions made to pensions and OPEBs and the net periodic benefit
 cost for pensions and OPEBs for 2015, 2016, and partial 2017.

# Q. Does the information provided in response to OPC data request 1101 follow the Commission approved Stipulation in case numbered GR-2014-0152?

A. No. The Stipulation explains any amount recovered in rates that are more than the actual payments would create a regulatory liability and costs would be returned to customers. Any amount recovered in rates that are less than the actual payments would create a regulatory asset and would be recovered by Liberty Utilities in a subsequent ratemaking process.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Staff Direct Cost of Service Report, page 20, lines 26 - 30, and page 21, lines 1 - 20
<sup>15</sup> Case numbered GR-2014-0152, Partial Stipulation and Agreement as to Certain Issues, page 2, paragraph 3

The Company's data provided in response to OPC data request 1101 does not appear to compare the difference between what customers have paid in rates and what actual contributions payments have been made to either fund.

# 4 Q. What is OPC's position regarding the regulatory asset/liability in the current case?

- A. Unless Liberty Utilities can provide information that correctly follows the Stipulation
   approved by the Commission in case numbered GR-2014-0152, there should be no regulatory
   asset or liability included in rate base in this rate case since the information has not been
   provided for review.
- 9 Q. Does this conclude your rebuttal testimony?
- 10 A. Yes.

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# CASE PARTICIPATION OF KERI ROTH

Company Name		Case No.
Empire District Electric Company		ER-2012-0345
Emerald Pointe Utility Company		SR-2013-0016
Lake Region Water & Sewer Company	,	WR-2013-0461
Summit Natural Gas of Missouri, Inc.		GR-2014-0086
Hickory Hills Water & Sewer Company	y, Inc.	WR-2014-0167/SR-2014-0166
Empire District Electric Company		ER-2014-0351
Laclede Gas Company		GO-2015-0178
Missouri Gas Energy		GO-2015-0179
Missouri American Water Company		WR-2015-0301
Empire District Electric Company		ER-2016-0023
Hillcrest Utility Operating Company, In	nc.	WR-2016-0064
Raccoon Creek Utility Operating Comp	pany, Inc.	SR-2016-0202
Moore Bend Water Utility, LLC		WC-2016-0252
Terre Du Lac Utilities Corporation		WR-2017-0110
Indian Hills Utility Operating Company	y, Inc.	WR-2017-0259
Missouri American Water Company		WR-2017-0285
Gascony Water Company		WR-2017-0343

# Data Information Request From Liberty Midstates - MO Case No. GR-2018-0013

Requested From:	Staff of the Commission – Asad Shakoor
Requested By:	Hampton Williams
Date of Request:	March 21, 2018

# **Information Requested:**

Has Staff included vacant positions in its payroll calculations for wages, benefits, and/or payroll taxes?

## **Response:**

No. Payroll, employee benefits, and payroll taxes were annualized for Staff's direct filing using actual known and measureable amounts by employee as of December 31, 2017.

The attached information provided to Office of the Public Counsel (OPC) in response to the above Data Information Request is accurate and complete and contains no material misrepresentations or omissions, based upon present facts of which the undersigned has knowledge, information or belief. The undersigned agrees to immediately inform OPC if, during the pendency of Case No. GR-2018-0013 before the Commission, any matters are discovered which would materially affect the accuracy or completeness of the attached information.

If these data are voluminous, please (1) identify the relevant documents and their location; (2) make arrangements with requestor to have documents available for inspection at a location mutually agreeable. Where identification of a document is requested, briefly describe the document (e.g., book, letter, memorandum, report) and state the following information as applicable for the particular document: name, title, number, author, date of publication and publisher, addresses, date written, and the name and address of the person(s) having possession of the document. As used in this Data Request, the term "document(s)" includes publication of any format, workpapers, letters, memoranda, notes, reports, analyses, computer analyses, test results, studies or data recordings, transcriptions and printed, typed or written materials of every kind in your possession, custody or control within your knowledge. The pronoun "you" or "your" refers to the person identified in the "Requested From" block above and all other employees, contractors, agents or others employed by or acting on behalf of the organization, group or governmental unit associated with that person. When used with respect to a natural person, "identify" means state his or her name, address, telephone number, current employer, job title, and current work telephone number.

Response Provided By: <u>Asad Shakoor</u>

Date: March 21, 2018

# **OPEB** Contributions

	Payment	Allocated to		Allocated to		Allocated to		Tota	I Allocated to
	 Amount	WE	MO (5.06%)	SEI	MO (34.83%)	NE	MO (25.25%)	Ν	IO (65.14%)
2015 Contributions:	\$ 1,009,592.00	\$	51,085.36	\$	351,640.89	\$	254,921.98	\$	657,648.23
2015 Net Periodic Benefit Cost (reg.)	\$ 998,708.00	\$	50,534.62	\$	347,850.00	\$	252,173.77	\$	650,558.39
	\$ 10,884.00	\$	550.73	\$	3,790.90	\$	2,748.21	\$	7,089.84

	 Payment Amount	llocated to MO (5.11%)	Allocated to MO (35.40%)	llocated to MO (25.85%)	al Allocated to 10 (66.36%)
2016 Contributions:	\$ 974,505.00	\$ 49,797.21	\$ 344,974.77	\$ 251,909.54	\$ 646,681.52
2016 Net Periodic Benefit Cost (reg.)	\$ 974,505.00	\$ 49,797.21	\$ 344,974.77	\$ 251,909.54	\$ 646,681.52
	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -

	Payment		Allocated to		Allocated to		llocated to	Total Allocated to		
	 Amount		WEMO (5.04%)		SEMO (35.31%)		NEMO (25.50%)		MO (65.85%)	
YTD 2017 Contributions:	\$ 988,985.00	\$	49,844.84	\$	349,210.60	\$	252,191.18	\$	651,246.62	
2017 Net Periodic Benefit Cost (reg.)	\$ 988,985.00	\$	49,844.84	\$	349,210.60	\$	252,191.18	\$	651,246.62	
	\$ 988,985.00	\$	49,844.84	\$	349,210.60	\$	252,191.18	\$	651,246.62	

# **Contributions vs Rates**

	٦	Total Funding					
	Al	located to MO	Net Periodic	<b>Regulatory Rate</b>			
Year		(65.85%)	Benefit Cost	Base Asset			
2015	\$	657,648.23	\$ 650,558.39	\$	7,089.84		
2016	\$	646,681.52	\$ 646,681.52	\$	-		
2017	\$	651,246.62	\$ 651,246.62	\$	-		
	\$	1,955,576.37	\$ 1,948,486.53	\$	7,089.84		

# **Qualified Pension Plan Contributions**

	Total Company		Allocated to WEMO (5.06%)		Allocated to SEMO (34.83%)		Allocated to NEMO (25.25%)		Total Allocated to MO (65.14%)	
<i>2015 Contributions:</i> 2015 Net Periodic Benefit Cost Excess Contributions:	\$ \$ \$	594,000.00 309,285.00 284,715.00	\$ \$ \$	30,056.40 15,649.82 14,406.58	\$ \$ \$	206,890.20 107,723.97 99,166.23	\$ \$ \$	149,985.00 78,094.46 71,890.54	\$ \$ \$	386,931.60 201,468.25 185,463.35
		Payment Amount	Allocated to WEMO (5.11%)		Allocated to SEMO (35.40%)		Allocated to NEMO (25.85%)		Total Allocated to MO (66.36%)	
2016 Contributions:	\$	647,600.00	\$	33,092.36	\$	229,250.40	\$	167,404.60	\$	429,747.36
2016 Net Periodic Benefit Cost	\$	369,898.00	\$	18,901.79	\$	130,943.89	\$	95,618.63	\$	245,464.31
Excess Contributions:	\$	277,702.00	\$	14,190.57	\$	98,306.51	\$	71,785.97	\$	184,283.05
		Payment Amount	Allocated to WEMO (5.04%)		Allocated to SEMO (35.31%)		Allocated to NEMO (25.50%)		Total Allocated to MO (65.85%)	
2017 Contributions:	\$	660,400.00	\$	33,284.16	\$	233,187.24	\$	168,402.00	\$	434,873.40
2017 Net Periodic Benefit Cost	\$	349,891.00	\$	17,634.51	\$	123,546.51	\$	89,222.21	\$	230,403.22
Excess Contributions:	\$	310,509.00	\$	15,649.65	\$	109,640.73	\$	79,179.80	\$	204,470.18

# Contributions vs MO Cost

	Т	otal Funding					
	All	ocated to MO	Net Periodic	R	egulatory Rate		
Year		(65.85%)	Benefit Cost	Base Asset			
2015	\$	386,931.60	\$ 201,468.25	\$	185,463.35		
2016		429,747.36	245,464.31		184,283.05		
2017		434,873.40	230,403.22		204,470.18		
	\$	1,251,552.36	\$ 677,335.79	\$	574,216.57		