

Complaint says Ameren is circumventing green power law



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A group of renewable energy advocates and solar installers says Ameren Missouri is violating the state's 2008 green power law, but the utility strongly denies the claims.

Renew Missouri, the group that led the push to pass the state's renewable energy law, filed a formal complaint Wednesday with the Missouri Public Service Commission.

The group says Ameren's strategy for complying with the renewable energy standard is stifling new green energy projects and jobs in Missouri.

"There's no wind development, and the solar carve-out is not being met with actual solar energy being delivered to Missouri," said PJ Wilson, Renew Missouri's executive director.

The case revives long-running arguments over how the renewable energy law is implemented. The measure, approved as Proposition C in 2008, requires investor-owned utilities to use renewable energy for a fraction of electricity sales.

Utilities are required to use renewable energy sources for 2 percent of electric sales this year, and the amount steps up to 15 percent in 2021.

Renew Missouri and other groups say Ameren is circumventing the law by counting generation from its century-old Keokuk, Iowa, hydropower plant on the Mississippi River to comply, and by using ineligible renewable energy certificates. The certificates, or RECs, can be bought or sold and represent renewable power put on the grid.

In a separate complaint, the groups say Ameren didn't submit necessary calculations comparing the retail impact of the renewable standard with other options.

The law states that the renewable energy mandate cannot cause retail electric rates to be more than 1 percent higher than they would be otherwise.

Warren Wood, Ameren Missouri's vice president of regulatory and legislative affairs, called charges in the complaint "100 percent false."

Ameren is supplying more renewable energy than required, he said. And it's the only Missouri utility to buy RECs from customers who put solar panels on homes and businesses, helping them defray the costs.

Wood said the charge that Ameren didn't provide necessary rate impact calculations is also off base. "It's an academic calculation now because we're not up against the 1 percent limit," he said.

Ameren files reports annually with the PSC outlining its plans to comply with the renewable energy standard. It submitted the most recent report in April.

The commission didn't approve or disapprove the report. However, the PSC staff and Department of Natural Resources found no deficiencies.

Renew Missouri and the other parties also filed related complaints against other investor-owned utilities.

Other complainants include Missouri Coalition for the Environment, Missouri Solar Energy Industries Association, Wind on the Wires, the Alternative Energy Co., StraightUp Solar and Missouri Solar Applications LLC.