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July 24, 2000

Mr. Dale Hardy Roberts
Secretary/Chief Regulatory Law Judge
Missouri Public Service Commission
P.O. Box 360
Jefferson City, MO 65102-0360

FILED

JUL 24 2000

Missouri Public
Service Commission

RE: EM-2000-369

Dear Mr. Roberts:

Enclosed for filing in the above-captioned case are an original and eight (8) conformed copies of Request of Intervenors Empire District Electric Retired Employees for Public Hearings regarding the above-referenced cause of action.

This filing has been mailed or hand-delivered this date to all counsel of record.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

James B. Deutsch

James B. Deutsch

JBD:krw

Enclosures

cc: Counsel of Record

BEFORE THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION
OF THE STATE OF MISSOURI

FILED

JUL 24 2000

Missouri Public
Service Commission

In the matter of the Joint Application)
of Utilicorp United Inc. and The Empire)
District Electric Company for authority)
to merge The Empire District Electric)
Company with and into Utilicorp United)
Inc. and, in connection therewith, certain)
other related transactions.)

EM-2000-369

**REQUEST OF INTERVENORS EMPIRE DISTRICT ELECTRIC
RETIRED EMPLOYEES FOR PUBLIC HEARINGS**

COME NOW Intervenor, Empire District Electric Company Retired Employees (Empire Retirees), pursuant to 4 CSR 240-2.110, and respectfully requests that this Commission schedule and hold a local public hearing on the Joint Application filed in this case. In support of this request, Intervenor state as follows:

Empire Retirees constitute a group which includes retired employees, surviving spouses of retired employees and disabled former employees, all of whom oppose the proposed merger of Empire and Utilicorp as not being in the public interest.

Empire Retirees reside, for the most part, in Southwest Missouri, particularly in the Joplin, Missouri area. Due to time constraints imposed by this Commission's procedural schedule in this case, which Intervenor have vowed to comply with, numerous and diverse individuals who would have testified in the evidentiary hearing currently scheduled for September 11-15, 2000 were unable to identify themselves and pre-file testimony in this case. Local public hearings would provide an opportunity for Commissioner's to hear the views and testimony of such individuals as well as other members of the public.

The issues concerning adverse impact of the proposed merger on Empire Retiree health, life,

accidental death and disability plans previously and currently benefitting the Empire Retirees is extensive and best capable of presentation by the individual members of the retired employee group. Therefore, local public hearings would assist the Commission in understanding these impacts and in resolving disputes with regard to them. Local public hearings would aid this Commission in reaching a just and reasonable final decision concerning the Joint Application for Approval in this case.

Retired employees recognize that considerable time, expense and inconvenience may be caused by such local public hearings if held in or near the City of Joplin. Because Intervenorers are for the most part retirees with flexibility of scheduling, such a public hearing opportunity would be appropriate if held in a place more convenient to Commissioners, Staff and Office of Public Counsel, such as Jefferson City, Missouri.

The Scheduling Order adopted by this Commission appears to contain ample opportunities for the scheduling of a public hearing in Joplin, Missouri, or in Jefferson City, Missouri, or in any other location, prior to the evidentiary hearing scheduled for September 11-15, 2000. Intervenorers respectfully suggest and recommend a public hearing be held on Aug. 28-31, 2000 at a location of the Missouri Public Service Commission's choosing.

WHEREFORE, Intervenorers respectfully request an Order of this Commission setting a local public hearing for the taking of testimony and evidence from members of the public on the Joint Application of Empire and Utilicorp filed in this case.

Respectfully submitted,

BLITZ, BARDGETT & DEUTSCH, L.C.

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CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that true and correct copies of the above and foregoing document were sent U.S. Mail, postage prepaid, to the following parties of record on this 27~~th~~ day of July, 2000:

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