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STATE OF MISSOURI

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PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

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TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

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Public Hearing

7

April 23, 2001

Joplin, Missouri

8

Volume 1

Case No. ER-2001-299

9

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In the Matter of The Empire District)
Electric Company's Tariff Sheets)
Designed to Implement a General Rate)
Increase for Retail Electric Service)
Provided to Customers in the Missouri)
Service Area of the Company)

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SHELLY A. REGISTER, Presiding
Deputy Chief Regulatory Law Judge

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SHEILA LUMPE, Chair
KEVIN L. SIMMONS, Commissioner

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REPORTED BY: LaVonne A. Larsen

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15 Also Present: Mr. James C. Watkins
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EXHIBIT	DESCRIPTION	IDENTIFIED
No. 1	Statement by Neosho Area Chamber of Commerce	28

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23 (Original exhibit attached to original
 transcript.)

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25 NOTARY'S CERTIFICATE: 147

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I N D E X

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WITNESS

TESTIMONY

3

MR. LOUIS HEIFNER:

13

MR. CHARLES McGREW:

16

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MR. M. EDWARD GREENSTREET:

21

MR. GIB GARROW:

24

5

MS. SHARON WESTON:

28

MS. CHARIS SEATON:

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MR. DWAIN WHEELER:

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MR. RALPH PIERCY:

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MS. LETTIE MILLER:

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MR. TIMOTHY SMITH:

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MS. LUISA WARNERMCKEE:

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MS. SANDY SMITH:

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MS. MARY ANN SIMRELL:

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MR. RICHARD SALYER:

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MR. JAMES BRUCE:

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MR. CRAIG DUNN:

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MS. JOY THOMPSON:

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MR. ELVIN DUNN:

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REVEREND RICH, SR.:

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MR. STANLEY MOFFETT:

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MS. JANE DANIELS:

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MR. HOWARD BLACKBURN:

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MR. ERVIN BARNETT:

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MS. LINDA DAVEY:

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MS. M. H. NICHOLS:

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MS. REBECCA BROOKS:

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MS. JUNE WILSON:

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1 JUDGE REGISTER: Good evening, ladies
2 and gentlemen. I'd like for the court
3 reporter to go on the record, please. Our
4 court reporter this evening is LaVonne
5 Larsen, and she'll be taking down a record of
6 this evening's testimony so that the other
7 commissioners can review that.

8 If you would like to testify, if you
9 haven't test -- signed up, there's a sign-up
10 sheet in the back, and you can step up there
11 and put your name down. Okay.

12 How about this? Can everybody hear me
13 fine? My name's Shelly Register, and I'm the
14 presiding officer for this evening in the
15 local public hearing, Case No. ER 2001-299.

16 This case is titled in the Matter of the
17 Empire District Electric Company's Tariff
18 Sheets Designed to Implement a General Rate
19 Increase For Retail Electric Service Provided
20 to Customers in the Missouri Service Area of
21 the Company.

22 Let me thank Missouri Southern State
23 College and their staff for assisting us in
24 setting this up this evening. And let me
25 introduce you to the commissioners that are

1 here beside me this evening. Chair Sheila
2 Lumpe is on the far left over here. And
3 Commissioner Kelvin Simmons is here next to
4 me.

5 The Missouri Public Service Commission
6 is a state agency which regulates investor
7 owned utility companies in Missouri to ensure
8 that the rates are just and reasonable, that
9 the quality of service is satisfactory, and
10 that safety practices are employed in their
11 operations while at the same time ensuring
12 the utility company a reasonable rate of
13 return to their shareholders.

14 The Missouri Public Service Commission
15 is made up five commissioners who are
16 appointed by the Governor and confirmed by
17 the Senate to hear and decide these cases
18 that involve the public in utility issues.

19 The commissioners that are not present
20 here tonight are Vice-chair Dianne Drainer,
21 Commissioner Connie Murray, and Commissioner
22 Steve Gaw. As I indicated earlier, this
23 proceeding is being recorded by our court
24 reporter, and these transcripts will be
25 available to all the commissioners to review,

1 and they will see your comments. So feel
2 free to make your comments fully, and the
3 other commissioners will hear them as well.

4 The Missouri Public Service Commission
5 employs a staff of engineers, accountants,
6 attorneys, financial analysts, and other
7 specialists in the field of utility
8 regulation and relies on their expertise,
9 along with expert testimony provided by the
10 other parties, and consumer testimony, the
11 testimony we'll receive here tonight.

12 Here with us tonight also is John
13 Coffman of the Office of the Public Counsel.
14 The Public Counsel is a separate agency from
15 the Public Service Commission, and by
16 legislative act, that office is charged to
17 represent the public's interests before the
18 Public Service Commission.

19 The Company is also represented here
20 tonight by Mr. Duffy, and they'll --
21 Mr. Duffy, does the Company have other
22 representatives present this evening?

23 MR. DUFFY: Yes.

24 JUDGE REGISTER: Would you like to
25 introduce those?

1 MR. DUFFY: Be glad to. At this time
2 I'd like to introduce some officers and
3 employees of the Empire District Electric
4 Company.

5 JUDGE REGISTER: Mr. Duffy, let me ask
6 you to -- if you want to go to the
7 microphone, I'm not sure everybody can hear
8 you.

9 MR. DUFFY: I will ask them to either
10 wave or stand so you can see who they are.
11 We have Myron McKinney, the president and
12 chief executive officer of Empire. We have
13 Bill Gibson, who is the executive vice
14 president of Empire. Dave Gibson, vice
15 president of finance. Mike Palmer, general
16 manager of commercial operations.

17 And if you -- if any of you have any
18 kind of service problems, Mike will be the
19 one to talk to. Brad Beecher, general
20 manager of energy supply. Amy Bass, in the
21 back, director of corporate communications.
22 And Julie Moss, a communications specialist.

23 Thank you. I don't think I missed
24 anybody, did I?

25 JUDGE REGISTER: And if you didn't have

1 an opportunity prior to the hearing, there
2 was a presentation before the hearing to talk
3 to these folks. I'm sure that Mr. Duffy will
4 have his people available to talk to you
5 later if you'd like.

6 I'll ask the other people here in front
7 to introduce yourselves as the attorneys of
8 record. Mr. Duffy, will you start entering
9 your appearance on record?

10 MR. DUFFY: I'm Gary Duffy of the law
11 firm Brydon, Swearngen & England, P.C., P.O.
12 Box 456, Jefferson City, Missouri, 65102.
13 I'm appearing for the Empire District
14 Electric Company.

15 MR. MEYER: I'm David Meyer, associate
16 general counsel for the Missouri Public
17 Service Commission, representing the staff of
18 the Public Service Commission. And the
19 address is P.O. Box 360, Jefferson City,
20 Missouri, 65102.

21 JUDGE REGISTER: Speak up louder for me.
22 Go ahead, Mr. Coffman.

23 MR. COFFMAN: John B. Coffman, appearing
24 on behalf of the Office of the Public Counsel
25 and the rate paying public, P.O. Box 7800,

1 Jefferson City, Missouri, 65102.

2 JUDGE REGISTER: And, Mr. Meyer, can you
3 introduce Mr. Watkins there with you?

4 MR. MEYER: This is James Watkins of the
5 staff of the Missouri Public Service
6 Commission.

7 JUDGE REGISTER: The purpose of this
8 hearing is to get your input, to take
9 evidence by way of your statement or your
10 testimony or any written statements or
11 documents that you may wish to provide to the
12 Missouri Public Service Commission regarding
13 Empire District Electric Company's request
14 for a rate increase.

15 We will take your comments from this
16 evening along with other evidence taken at
17 the evidentiary hearings, and the Commission
18 will issue its decision. At this time, I'd
19 like to ask Chair Lumpe if she'd like to make
20 any opening remarks.

21 CHAIR LUMPE: Just very briefly, we're
22 very pleased to see so many of you here. We
23 look forward to hearing your comments. As
24 was stated, your comments are important to us
25 so that we know what the public is thinking

1 about this.

2 We will hear, as the judge has said,
3 evidentiary testimony later. And there the
4 various intervenors and parties will give
5 their points of view.

6 But tonight, it is your testimony that
7 will be important, that we want to hear. And
8 it will have a very big impact on what we do
9 in our decision. So we do appreciate each
10 one of you that have taken the time to come
11 out.

12 JUDGE REGISTER: And, Commissioner
13 Simmons, would you like to make a statement?

14 COMMISSIONER SIMMONS: I will. Let me
15 say good evening to each and every one of
16 you. Indeed, it is a pleasure for me to be
17 here to see so many of you. I will be brief
18 in my comments, also, by saying and echoing
19 what Chair Lumpe has said.

20 This, quite frankly, is your night to
21 talk to us, to tell the Commission what's on
22 your mind. We do appreciate you coming out
23 here. I appreciate being in Joplin.

24 This is my first time in being with you
25 as a commissioner. Not my first and, Lord

1 willing, it won't be my last time for being
2 in Joplin.

3 Again, we hope to hear from you, the
4 public. When you make your comments and you
5 testify before us, it does have an impact.
6 And so I would hope that each and every one
7 of you that have something to say will
8 testify so we can hear exactly what's on your
9 mind.

10 Again, I thank you for being here
11 tonight, and I look forward to your
12 testimony.

13 JUDGE REGISTER: Thank you, Commissioner.
14 Now we will proceed with the taking of
15 testimony at this time. I will tell you that
16 we encourage you to testify at this time.

17 We ask people, because this is an
18 official hearing and the statements and the
19 testimony of the witness is taken down by the
20 court reporter on the record, that you come
21 down and be sworn in. We have to take the
22 testimony under oath.

23 And when your name is called, please
24 come forward and come to the podium and speak
25 in the microphone so that everyone else can

1 hear you.

2 Only one person can testify at a time,
3 so I ask you not to make comments from the
4 seating area so that everyone can have their
5 comments made on the record.

6 I do understand that some people don't
7 want to make a statement at the podium. And
8 there are cards, I understand, with the
9 business address of the Commission at the
10 back table.

11 If you'd rather send us your written
12 comments, that's acceptable, and those will
13 be filed in the official record in our
14 comments section.

15 You can also send your comments to the
16 Office of the Public Counsel, and they will
17 consider those comments as well -- or present
18 those to the Commission for consideration as
19 evidence.

20 And if someone else has said something
21 that you wanted to say, you're welcome to
22 come down and testify, or you can just simply
23 indicate you'll give us your name and your
24 address and tell us that you agreed with
25 someone else's comments. And that's

1 acceptable as well.

2 After you've completed your comments,
3 please remain because the commissioners may
4 have questions for you, and the other
5 attorneys may just have a clarifying question
6 that they want to ask you.

7 So does anyone have any questions about
8 the procedure we'll use? Okay. Then we will
9 begin. Okay. And my first witness here is
10 Louis Heifner.

11 Whereupon,

12 MR. LOUIS HEIFNER,
13 of lawful age, testified as follows:

14 JUDGE REGISTER: Thank you, Mr. Heifner.
15 Please proceed. Can you spell your name for
16 the court reporter.

17 MR. HEIFNER: It's Heifner. It's
18 spelled H-e-i-f-n-e-r.

19 JUDGE REGISTER: And can you tell us
20 what your address is?

21 MR. HEIFNER: 1502 East Laverne Street,
22 Bolivar, Missouri, 65613.

23 JUDGE REGISTER: Thank you. And are you
24 a customer of Empire District?

25 MR. HEIFNER: Yes, I am.

1 JUDGE REGISTER: Thank you, Mr. Heifner.
2 Please proceed.

3 MR. HEIFNER: Madam Chairman,
4 Commissioners, members of the loyal
5 opposition, we're pleased that the Commission
6 sited this place as a place for the hearing.
7 As you can see, we have a packed house.

8 Now, Bolivar, as you may know, is the
9 only city in Missouri that I know of that
10 passed a cat leash law. So you kind of you
11 understand the mentality of our aldermen.
12 They recently renewed the franchise with
13 Empire. But that's not the point.

14 The point is this ludicrous 19 percent
15 increase. For us retirees and others on
16 fixed incomes, that is an insurmountable
17 figure. And I don't feel that -- as a
18 customer.

19 And I don't know why, since the growth
20 rate in this part of the state is not that
21 great, why we need an additional power plant.
22 Now, maybe we do, and they'll probably try to
23 justify that. But the point is, are we
24 building a power plant to bail out
25 California?

1 AUDIENCE MEMBER: No. Branson.

2 MR. HEIFNER: It's all hooked to the
3 grid. Empire would love to sell power to
4 California. But California is the maker of
5 their own problems.

6 Why should we have to bail them out?
7 Now, maybe that's not the purpose in this
8 power plant. I don't know that. But it's
9 sure -- it sure looks that way.

10 Now, one other thing, and then I'm going
11 to be as a journalist says, "Be brief, be
12 blunt, and be gone." There's a rate tacked
13 on your light bill by Empire, \$7.58, each and
14 every month for customer service. That's the
15 most ludicrous thing that I ever heard of.

16 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Hear, hear.

17 MR. HEIFNER: Why do we have corporate
18 welfare like that?

19 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Hear, hear.

20 MR. HEIFNER: I think it's high time
21 that the Commission look at the profit
22 structure of this company. Now, I realize
23 it's a stockholder company, and I've got
24 stock in it. But what is a fair profit?

25 In this day and age when all of us are

1 barely getting by on retired salaries, and
2 others -- people having to work two and three
3 jobs, why is it that this utility company is
4 asking for this much of an increase?

5 Folks, if you want to give them that
6 much of an increase, spread it over ten
7 years. That's 2 percent a year. I'm done.
8 Thank you.

9 JUDGE REGISTER: Thank you, Mr. Heifner.
10 Just one moment. Let me see if there are any
11 questions.

12 Mr. Coffman, do you have any questions?

13 MR. COFFMAN: No questions.

14 JUDGE REGISTER: And, Mr. Meyer?

15 MR. MEYER: No questions.

16 JUDGE REGISTER: Mr. Duffy?

17 MR. DUFFY: No questions either.

18 JUDGE REGISTER: Commissioners?

19 CHAIR LUMPE: Thank you for coming and
20 giving us your point.

21 JUDGE REGISTER: The next witness is
22 Charles McGrew.

23 Whereupon,

24 MR. CHARLES MCGREW,
25 of lawful age, testified as follows:

1 JUDGE REGISTER: Thank you, sir. Can
2 you state and spell your name for the court
3 reporter?

4 MR. MCGREW: Charles McGrew,
5 M-c-G-r-e-w.

6 JUDGE REGISTER: And what's your
7 address, sir?

8 MR. MCGREW: 2912 Minnesota. I live in
9 Joplin.

10 JUDGE REGISTER: And you're an Empire
11 District customer?

12 MR. MCGREW: Yes, I am.

13 JUDGE REGISTER: Please proceed.

14 MR. MCGREW: I guess I'd just like to
15 state that I've lived in Joplin my whole
16 life. I've been an Empire customer for 30
17 years, paid bills for 30 bills.

18 And I've known Empire to be a very fair
19 and responsible provider for the community.
20 They have -- I feel like, make a very strong
21 effort to provide good service.

22 We had a storm here, I guess it's been
23 about a week or so ago. And I know that
24 there were some folks without electricity for
25 a couple of days. However, I happen to live

1 just a block from where a lot of the damage
2 was.

3 The storm came through at 1:00 o'clock.
4 By 2:30 in the morning, there were full crews
5 from Empire out there working. And most
6 utilities, you can't say that.

7 And I understand that, you know, when
8 you do without your electricity, if you're
9 one of those without electricity, you're
10 impatient. You'd like to have things back on
11 as soon as possible. But I think that Empire
12 makes a strong effort to get that taken care
13 of.

14 They've been a good -- I feel like a
15 good citizen throughout the years that I've
16 known. And putting in a new power plant to
17 provide the power that's required, when they
18 set it --

19 It's my understanding when they set it
20 up, decided to go gas for a variety of
21 reasons. That was before the huge
22 fluctuations in gas that we experienced this
23 last winter.

24 Which, on a sidebar, I'd like to express
25 my appreciation to the Commission for having

1 this hearing. And I know I'm not allowed to
2 ask questions, but I'd just like to state
3 that, to my knowledge, I'm curious as to why
4 there wasn't one of these, you know, for the
5 gas, you know, the huge gas bill that we got
6 caught into.

7 Empire's caught in that same thing. One
8 of the reasons that they put gas power rather
9 than coal is because it's cleaner. Again, I
10 think, trying to be a good neighbor and good
11 citizen. I just believe that.

12 And I'm just like everybody else. I
13 have to pay my electric bill. I don't like
14 to see them go up any more than anybody else.
15 I have to make my payments, and I have to
16 make ends meet and on a budget just like
17 everybody.

18 But I think when you have a utility
19 company that does as good a job, frankly, as
20 I believe Empire does and is trying to be a
21 good citizen and a good neighbor, I just
22 don't have a problem for them asking for an
23 increase like this to recapture costs.

24 I'd like to keep my electric bill down
25 just like everyone else would. But I

1 understand that there are expenses, and I
2 understand the expense in putting in a new
3 plant. And they're trying to maintain the
4 excellent service that they've provided over
5 the last 30 years that I've been paying. So
6 I'm not against the increase.

7 JUDGE REGISTER: Are there any
8 questions? I'm sorry, sir. I can only let
9 the attorneys of record ask questions. You
10 will have your chance to make your own
11 comments, okay? And we'll hold those. All
12 right? Mr. Duffy, any questions?

13 MR. DUFFY: No questions.

14 CHAIR LUMPE: Thank you for coming.

15 JUDGE REGISTER: Thank you, Mr. McGrew.
16 Okay. I will ask the public to be respectful
17 of the person giving their comments. You
18 will have an opportunity to come up and give
19 your own comments.

20 But so that everybody can hear the
21 comments and so that the court reporter can
22 get those comments, I'd appreciate your
23 making your comments at the podium. The next
24 witness is M. Edward Greenstreet.

25 Before I start, Mr. Greenstreet.

1 If you haven't signed up, there still is
2 a list at the back of the room that you can
3 sign up to testify.

4 Whereupon,

5 MR. M. EDWARD GREENSTREET,
6 of lawful age, testified as follows:

7 JUDGE REGISTER: And can you state and
8 spell your name for the court reporter?

9 MR. GREENSTREET: The last name?

10 JUDGE REGISTER: Yeah.

11 MR. GREENSTREET: Greenstreet, green
12 street, G-r-e-e-n-s-t-r-e-e-t.

13 JUDGE REGISTER: And your address,
14 please?

15 MR. GREENSTREET: 131 Orchard Street,
16 Marionville, Missouri.

17 JUDGE REGISTER: And you're a customer
18 of Empire District Electric Company?

19 MR. GREENSTREET: Yes.

20 JUDGE REGISTER: Thank you,
21 Mr. Greenstreet. Please continue with your
22 comments.

23 MR. GREENSTREET: Okay. We bought this
24 property three years ago in Marionville.
25 They had several security lights. And we cut

1 every one off except for two.

2 And we work in Springfield all day long,
3 and we have hardly ever even seen a decrease
4 in our power, our electric bill. It just
5 seems like it just -- it either stays right
6 where it's at, or it goes up. We can't
7 understand why.

8 We don't have nothing running but our
9 refrigerator when we're gone during the day.
10 We leave at a quarter to 6:00 in the morning,
11 and we're gone until 6:30, quarter to 7:00 in
12 the evening.

13 And I just don't feel that this rate
14 increase is really fair to us. And my
15 neighbors feel the same way. I wish there
16 was all -- the others could be here, but they
17 had other things that couldn't allow them to
18 be here. If I had a van, I could bring a lot
19 of them. And I guess that's all I can say.

20 JUDGE REGISTER: Okay. Just a moment,
21 Mr. Greenstreet.

22 MR. GREENSTREET: Oh, another thing,
23 too. Right behind our house is a power
24 plant, electric power plant. In the winter
25 times when we have storms, the power goes

1 out.

2 They got one of these big, square
3 security lights, and it goes out. And I'll
4 call. Our neighbors will call. And they're
5 prompt. Within 10 or 15 minutes, they're out
6 there, working on it, and they get us back in
7 service.

8 As far as the service, it's good
9 whenever we have storms. I guess, one of the
10 reasons, too, we're on the same line as the
11 rest home. So that's one reason we're
12 thankful about in that location, because the
13 rest home gets power quicker than anybody.

14 But they are pretty fast with their
15 service. But the rates are just outrageous.
16 It's just me and my wife, and we're gone all
17 day. We work in Springfield.

18 JUDGE REGISTER: Can you wait just a
19 moment, please? Are there any questions for
20 Mr. Greenstreet?

21 COMMISSIONER SIMMONS: I do have one.

22 Good evening, Mr. Greenstreet. Thanks
23 for being here. How far is Marionville from
24 the Joplin area?

25 MR. GREENSTREET: Let's see. It's 90 --

1 it's 85 miles from Joplin to Springfield, and
2 we're 25 miles southwest of Springfield.

3 COMMISSIONER SIMMONS: That's where your
4 home is in --

5 MR. GREENSTREET: Uh-huh.

6 COMMISSIONER SIMMONS: So you've come
7 quite a ways. Thank you. I appreciate you
8 being here.

9 CHAIR LUMPE: Thank you, Mr. Greenstreet.

10 JUDGE REGISTER: And if you have other
11 people that you want to give the address to,
12 the cards are up there on the table. Take
13 several of them.

14 MR. GREENSTREET: I did.

15 JUDGE REGISTER: Okay. Good enough.
16 Thank you, Mr. Greenstreet.

17 The next witness is Gib Garrow.

18 Whereupon,

19 MR. GIB GARROW,
20 of lawful age, testified as follows:

21 JUDGE REGISTER: Can you spell your last
22 name for us?

23 MR. GARROW: G-a-r-r-o-w, G in front of
24 arrow.

25 JUDGE REGISTER: And your address,

1 please?

2 MR. GARROW: 628 Oak Ridge Drive,
3 Neosho, Missouri.

4 JUDGE REGISTER: And you are an Empire
5 District Electric Company customer?

6 MR. GARROW: Yes, I am.

7 JUDGE REGISTER: Thank you, Mr. Garrow.
8 Please proceed.

9 MR. GARROW: Tonight I've come in a
10 capacity of executive vice president of the
11 Neosho Area Chamber of Commerce.

12 We had a board meeting last week and had
13 some discussion about -- the paper said that
14 we could come and express any concerns that
15 we may have with the Public Service
16 Commission rate increase. I've prepared a
17 statement on behalf of our board of
18 directors.

19 The following is in no way intended to
20 be an endorsement of the proposed rate
21 increase, nor is it in opposition to the
22 increase. The sole purpose of this statement
23 is to make the Commission aware of Empire
24 District's commitment to service to the
25 community.

1 The Neosho Area Chamber of Commerce
2 Board of Directors wishes to express to the
3 Missouri Corporation's -- Public Service
4 Commission a concern: that concern being
5 that the Commission may not realize what a
6 community supporter Empire District Electric
7 is. Neosho, Missouri, has been the recipient
8 of much support given to the community by
9 Empire District Electric for many, many
10 years.

11 They have shown support for the
12 community's economic development efforts as
13 well as other efforts in Neosho, such as the
14 Newton County Senior Center, in the late
15 '80s, in which their local manager was
16 chairperson of the campaign that raised
17 \$365,000 to build a new center for the senior
18 citizens.

19 More recently, they have contributed to
20 the YMCA and the Downtown Revitalization
21 Project in Neosho. The Company not only
22 lends their support, but many of their
23 employees are involved in civic groups,
24 churches and schools and other volunteer
25 efforts including Habitat for Humanity.

1 They're involved in far too many community
2 projects to mention them tonight.

3 It is the Neosho Area Chamber of
4 Commerce Board of Directors' belief that
5 these employees are involved because of the
6 leadership examples set by the top management
7 in Empire District Electric. Empire District
8 Electric is a partner in our community, not
9 just a utility service provider.

10 They have a long history of investing in
11 our community's services, not just the
12 community they -- in our community, not just
13 the community their headquarters are located
14 in. They set an example of how every utility
15 company should be involved in the communities
16 they serve and supportive of them.

17 That is why this Board of Directors
18 takes this opportunity to come before the
19 Commission and express gratitude publicly for
20 this company's involvement in our community.

21 JUDGE REGISTER: Thank you, Mr. Garrow.
22 Are there any questions?

23 CHAIR LUMPE: Mr. Garrow, would you like
24 to submit that into the record or as a -- and
25 you did state that you're not taking a

1 position of pro or con?

2 MR. GARROW: That's correct.

3 CHAIR LUMPE: Thank you.

4 (Exhibit No. 1 marked for identification.)

5 JUDGE REGISTER: Thank you, Mr. Garrow.

6 The next witness is Sharon Western.

7 MS. WESTON: Weston.

8 Whereupon,

9 MS. SHARON WESTON,

10 of lawful age, testified as follows:

11 JUDGE REGISTER: Can you spell your name
12 for the court reporter?

13 MS. WESTON: S-h-a-r-o-n W-e-s-t-o-n.

14 JUDGE REGISTER: And your address?

15 MS. WESTON: I live at 123 Brownell here
16 in Joplin. I'm a life -- I've lived here all
17 my life.

18 And all I want to state is I have five
19 children. They're all grown and live away
20 from home. But they barely can make it,
21 paying their car payments, their utilities,
22 things like that, to live now. And with the
23 19 percent increase, I don't know how they're
24 going to be able to make it.

25 And their dad and I -- their dad is

1 retired. He worked 31 years at Fleming
2 Grocery Company, and he works hard all the
3 time. He's a bus driver for R-8 here in
4 Joplin, and -- because he can't completely
5 retire because of the bills going up and
6 things like that.

7 And so that's all I want to say is as a
8 normal citizen, I have no complaints about
9 Empire. They have good service and stuff.
10 But a 19 percent increase for a normal family
11 is a lot of money.

12 And it's going to affect a lot of
13 people. It's going to affect the old people.
14 It's going to affect the young people,
15 because these young people are barely making
16 it now. The older people are barely making
17 it now.

18 And, you know, I'm just talking as a
19 regular citizen. And I don't know how people
20 are going to be able to make it. And
21 these -- these big companies, they don't take
22 into consideration us little people enough.
23 And they should. Thank you.

24 (Applause.)

25 JUDGE REGISTER: Are there any questions

1 for Ms. Weston?

2 CHAIR LUMPE: Ms. Weston, do your
3 children live in the Joplin area?

4 MS. WESTON: Yes, they do. I have three
5 that lives in Joplin, one that lives in
6 Topeka, and one that lives in Iowa. And --
7 but three that live in the Joplin area, and
8 they are Empire customers.

9 JUDGE REGISTER: The next witness is
10 Chariss Seaton.

11 Whereupon,

12 MS. CHARIS SEATON,
13 of lawful age, testified as follows:

14 JUDGE REGISTER: Would you state and
15 spell your name for the court reporter?

16 MS. SEATON: C-h-a-r-i-s S-e-a-t-o-n.

17 JUDGE REGISTER: And your address?

18 MS. SEATON: 6615 Castle Heights Road,
19 Joplin.

20 JUDGE REGISTER: And you're a customer
21 of Empire District?

22 MS. SEATON: Yes, I am.

23 JUDGE REGISTER: Please proceed with
24 your comments.

25 MS. SEATON: I'd like to say that -- I

1 would like to say that I appreciate the
2 Commission's public forum and Empire for
3 giving us this opportunity to speak.

4 My husband and I moved here from
5 California two years ago to the Joplin area.
6 We were raised in the Joplin area. We came
7 back thinking it was going to be a cheaper
8 cost of living for us.

9 We purchased our home. It's not a big
10 home. It's about 1600 square feet. One of
11 the things that appealed to us was that our
12 home was gas. Well, that went up. And --
13 but our air conditioning is electric.

14 And when we first bought the house,
15 within a week after we moved in, we would
16 come home from our work, and our lights --
17 our digital clocks and our -- we have a
18 computer programmable refrigerator, and it
19 would be beeping at us, and the lights would
20 be flashing -- our digital alarm clocks would
21 be flashing.

22 And we thought perhaps we had a problem,
23 maybe a power surge of some sort in our home.
24 So we called Empire, and they were very, very
25 responsive. They came out. They checked

1 everything out. They said, "There's not a
2 problem."

3 But this occurred several days in a row,
4 and it seemed like it was -- I could almost
5 pinpoint when it was going to happen. I
6 continued to call because I was concerned
7 that, again, maybe it was in our wiring in
8 our home, and we needed to have a
9 professional electrician come and take a look
10 at the house.

11 Empire came out again, very responsive.
12 They said that it must have been squirrels
13 tripping the lines, that that happens quite
14 often in the area that we're in, or tree
15 limbs interfering with the lines. I took
16 that with a grain of salt, and said, "Okay,
17 fine."

18 But it continued to happen. Now it
19 happens maybe once or twice a month. It's
20 not as bad. My question to Empire was, Is
21 this indicative of another problem? Is it
22 perhaps the transformers or the power lines
23 in our area? And what's going to happen when
24 we have a disaster or something that knocks
25 out our power? How responsive will they be?

1 And we found out, of course, as
2 everybody knows, on Easter holiday weekend.
3 Our lights went out at 1:30 a.m. I called
4 every four hours for two days straight, never
5 getting a response. I mean, they were
6 responding all right, but they would not tell
7 us how long it would take.

8 Now, we lived in California and, you
9 know, everybody knows about the problems
10 they're having right now. I am grateful
11 we're not there, having to deal with those
12 kinds of problems.

13 However, PG&E was very responsive. They
14 could assess the situation. It didn't take
15 them very long. They had an answer that was
16 within the range of estimated when they would
17 be back -- when they could get us back on
18 line.

19 And so I was expecting the same customer
20 service when I called Empire. I was also
21 expecting that since I had -- we run on well,
22 so our well is electric, and we'd have no
23 water.

24 Well, being from California, my husband
25 and I have kits. You know, we put together

1 the water jugs and everything, and we have
2 that in our basement for purposes like this
3 because we are on a well. And we know we're
4 not always going to have electricity when we
5 have these storms come through.

6 So when I asked Empire how long it was
7 going to be before they thought we'd be on
8 line again, they said, "I don't know. They
9 don't tell us anything out on the lines. The
10 work crews don't tell us anything. The work
11 crews only tell us it's going to be a while."

12 Okay. So we spent Easter with my
13 mother-in-law. We had to go over there and
14 get cleaned up before spending Easter with
15 the rest of the family. When we left, Arde's
16 Villa and all of Castle Heights Road, all of
17 Castle Drive, and the bluffs above us,
18 including Redings Mill Inn, were out of
19 power.

20 When we came back that evening, Arde's
21 Villa, Redings Mill Inn and the people above
22 us had power. Parts of Castle Drive and all
23 of Castle Heights Road did not. The next day
24 I called again, and said, "I don't understand
25 what's going on. Everybody around us has

1 power except our street."

2 After discussing this same situation
3 with Conover (ph.) who lives in Seneca, he
4 said about ten years ago they had a problem
5 with ice on the lines, and they were without
6 power for three days. He said he called
7 continuously for three days.

8 By the time Empire did come out, three
9 days later, of course, it took ten minutes to
10 flip a switch on a transformer, and they had
11 power. So when I was talking with Empire on
12 the second day, still with no power, I asked
13 them, "Is this a matter of just flipping a
14 switch on a transformer, or, you know, what's
15 going on?"

16 And they said, "No, ma'am, I'm sure
17 that's probably not the problem, but you do
18 know that we have crews out. And we have to
19 send these crews to the most affected areas
20 first."

21 I said, "Okay. I can understand that,
22 Branson, whatever. But do you have to send
23 your crews out before you get the people in
24 our own back yards on line?" "Well, yes."
25 And I didn't understand that. I could not

1 understand why.

2 I made the comment, "Who's going to pay
3 for my spoilage?" We had meat that spoiled
4 that -- you cannot refreeze meat once it's
5 thawed. You have to throw it out. You can't
6 refreeze it.

7 And I was being serious about this
8 because in California, PG&E had a department
9 that dealt specifically with spoilage and
10 claims. And the comment that the Empire rep
11 made to me was -- when I asked who I needed
12 to submit my claim to, thinking that they had
13 a similar method for claims -- said to me,
14 "Well, I guess Mother Nature."

15 Okay. I was not happy with that
16 response. The next day, I did call and speak
17 with a supervisor. She was very apologetic,
18 very nice. Again, though, not able to tell
19 me when our power was going to be on.

20 My husband went out and bought a
21 generator. Generators are not cheap. We
22 bought it so that we could run our -- at
23 least our refrigerator, our furnace in the
24 winter and our well. Within 30 minutes after
25 coming home with this generator, our power

1 the outages that you talked about?

2 MS. SEATON: Yes. Two days after our
3 lights came back on, we came home. And our
4 lights were flash -- I mean, our digital
5 clock and our refrigerator had gone out.
6 They're telling me, though, it's not
7 considered really an outage.

8 They're saying it could be a bird or a
9 squirrel or a tree limb that just kind of
10 short-circuits it. It's like a fault
11 protection system, ground protection system,
12 or something like that.

13 CHAIR LUMPE: Thank you.

14 COMMISSIONER SIMMONS: When was the
15 last -- very last time you experienced that
16 situation? Days, weeks?

17 MS. SEATON: I would say it was within a
18 few days after our power came on after the
19 storms Easter holiday weekend. And I don't
20 believe we've experienced it since. I would
21 say it probably occurs maybe twice a month,
22 if I had to count. It was happening, like I
23 said, every two or three days weekly, on a
24 weekly basis.

25 COMMISSIONER SIMMONS: Mr. Duffy, maybe

1 you might have somebody that could see to it?

2 MR. DUFFY: See that man right there
3 with the glasses, Mike Palmer. Could you
4 please speak with him, see what you can work
5 out?

6 MS. SEATON: I will. Thank you.

7 JUDGE REGISTER: The next witness is
8 George Tremble.

9 MR. TREMBLE: I signed that book back
10 there, but I didn't know I was supposed to
11 testify, and so I don't have anything to say.

12 JUDGE REGISTER: Thank you, Mr. Tremble.
13 The next witness is Sue Firth.

14 MS. FIRTH: I didn't know that I'd be
15 testifying either, so I'm going to write my
16 comments.

17 JUDGE REGISTER: Thank you. I apologize
18 in advance, but Duwon (sic) Wheeler.

19 MR. WHEELER: I had a wreck one time.
20 It's taught me a lot. My dad and my
21 grandfather was a Freewill Baptist Preacher.
22 And I used to be real afraid. But you know,
23 anymore, the government's making me hell mad.

24 JUDGE REGISTER: Let me ask you to take
25 the oath for me.

1 Whereupon,

2 MR. DWAIN WHEELER,

3 of lawful age, testified as follows:

4 JUDGE REGISTER: And let me ask you to
5 spell your first and last name for the court
6 reporter.

7 MR. WHEELER: D-w-a-i-n W-h-e-e-l-e-r.

8 JUDGE REGISTER: And your address,
9 Mr. Wheeler?

10 MR. WHEELER: 2002 South Connor, Joplin.

11 JUDGE REGISTER: And you're a customer
12 of Empire District?

13 MR. WHEELER: Yes. I'm a citizen of the
14 United States also.

15 JUDGE REGISTER: Thank you, Mr. Wheeler.
16 Proceed with your comments.

17 MR. WHEELER: Well, all that's going on
18 is politics, taking in all of us, on anything
19 that they can get money out of. The people
20 that's already got money, they want more
21 money. They're getting greedy, okay? It's
22 the truth. I was a Bush man, but now I'm
23 going to be a Bush-whacker.

24 (Applause.)

25 MR. WHEELER: I was a Republican, but

1 not his kind of Republican. I think it's
2 just a made-up deal to dig us. I heard John
3 Wayne say it's the middle class is the one
4 that makes this country. And it's the middle
5 class that's doing it.

6 It's not the greed of the people. Greed
7 just makes you selfish. You don't have no
8 love; you don't have nothing. You don't even
9 love your wife, and you don't love your kids.
10 That's the truth. That's all I'm going to
11 say.

12 JUDGE REGISTER: Any questions for
13 Mr. Wheeler? Thank you, Mr. Wheeler.

14 (Applause.)

15 JUDGE REGISTER: Ralph Piercy.

16 Whereupon,

17 MR. RALPH PIERCY,
18 of lawful age, testified as follows after
19 affirming:

20 JUDGE REGISTER: Thank you very much,
21 Mr. Piercy. Can you spell your --

22 MR. PIERCY: My name is Ralph Piercy,
23 and you spell Piercy P-i-e-r-c-y.

24 JUDGE REGISTER: And your address,
25 Mr. Piercy?

1 MR. PIERCY: My address is 10622 Cedar
2 Road, Carthage.

3 JUDGE REGISTER: And you're a customer
4 of Empire District?

5 MR. PIERCY: I've got my invitation
6 right here.

7 JUDGE REGISTER: Thank you very much,
8 Mr. Piercy. Please make your comments.

9 MR. PIERCY: I -- I really basically
10 think and always felt that Empire was a
11 pretty good company to do business with. I
12 was born and raised here. And I've been a
13 farmer.

14 And on the farm, I had an Empire meter
15 on one end of it, and on the other end, I had
16 a New-Mac meter. And I was always better
17 satisfied with Empire than New-Mac. And I've
18 been on Carthage Electric, too. But
19 Empire's -- would be my choice if I had a
20 choice.

21 And I look at paying my bill, my
22 electric bill, kind of like taking a pill
23 once a month. And when this pill gets 20
24 percent larger, it's liable to choke you.
25 So --

1 (Applause.)

2 MR. PIERCY: I thought that -- now, I
3 can understand. We're getting a new plant
4 and such like. But I think that they
5 probably made a mistake by making it all gas
6 instead of -- instead of either having gas
7 and -- and an alternate fuel to -- to power
8 their plant. But they made that decision.
9 And they may be in a bind right now, and they
10 may need their customers to help them out a
11 little bit.

12 And whenever I say "help them out a
13 little bit," I wouldn't -- I probably
14 wouldn't mind paying more for my utilities.
15 But 20 percent? That makes that pill awful
16 big. Why couldn't -- why couldn't they
17 prorate it 2 percent a year like the other
18 gentleman said, or raise it 10 percent and
19 then 1 percent a year for the next 10 years
20 following that?

21 That'd make it -- that'd make the pill
22 go down pretty -- a lot better, you know,
23 pretty easy. So that's my main complaint is
24 they're just putting -- it's just taking too
25 big a bite out of our -- out of our income

1 for power.

2 And I do have one little complaint about
3 my power, and that is, see, I used to furnish
4 power on board a ship. And if we had a
5 switching problem, we brought that current up
6 before it was ever switched, and it just
7 phased right in.

8 But here, their switching is off
9 somewhat, because a lot of times, it'll kill
10 our TV, and it'll be off for a little while
11 before it comes back on. And our power,
12 there's an interruption in it.

13 And I think it's probably in their
14 switching. And if they'd pay a little more
15 attention to their switching, why, it'd be a
16 lot more convenient for all their customers.

17 JUDGE REGISTER: So you're having
18 similar problems to the other lady was having
19 where you're losing power?

20 MR. PIERCY: I feel it's in the
21 switching, whenever they switch from one
22 power source to another power source. I've
23 had to operate generating equipment in the
24 Navy, and I'm familiar with what happens,
25 only they're not getting chewed out by the

1 captain of the ship.

2 JUDGE REGISTER: Let me see if we have
3 any questions for you.

4 MR. PIERCY: Very well.

5 CHAIR LUMPE: Mr. Piercy, you mentioned
6 New-Mac Electric. What is New-Mac?

7 MR. PIERCY: New-Mac is another electric
8 company in the region here.

9 CHAIR LUMPE: A private one or a co-op
10 or what?

11 MR. PIERCY: It's co-op.

12 CHAIR LUMPE: Thank you.

13 JUDGE REGISTER: Mr. Simmons, any
14 questions?

15 COMMISSIONER SIMMONS: No questions.
16 Thank you for your testimony.

17 JUDGE REGISTER: Thank you, Mr. Piercy.
18 Lettie Miller.

19 Whereupon,

20 MS. LETTIE MILLER,
21 of lawful age, testified as follows:

22 JUDGE REGISTER: Could you please spell
23 your first name and last name for the court
24 reporter?

25 MS. MILLER: Lettie Miller, L-e-t-t-i-e

1 M-i-l-l-e-r.

2 JUDGE REGISTER: And, Ms. Miller, can we
3 get your address?

4 MS. MILLER: 2438 Minnesota, Joplin.

5 JUDGE REGISTER: And you are an Empire
6 District Electric Company customer?

7 MS. MILLER: Yes. First of all, I'd
8 like to thank Empire that you're still in
9 business with us. We could have been sold
10 out, couldn't we?

11 My main concern is this article in the
12 paper Sunday, April the 8th, that says that
13 the increase will affect us if you use 700
14 kilowatts. Is that what we're going to be
15 billed for is 700 kilowatts? If so, I want
16 that in writing. 700 kilowatts is a light
17 bulb and a small refrigerator.

18 JUDGE REGISTER: You need to just kind
19 of make your comments, and they can maybe
20 answer your questions later.

21 MS. MILLER: Yeah. But I mean to make
22 people aware of this -- it makes us sound
23 like we're going back to the Dark Ages. 700
24 kilowatts, I don't think any of us has seen
25 700 kilowatts for a long time.

13 (Applause.)

16 CHAIR LUMPE: Thank you, Ms. Miller.

19 MR. G. SMITH: I'm not going to testify.

22 Earl Ferguson. Earl Ferguson. Do you
23 want to make any comments, Mr. Ferguson?

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1 JUDGE REGISTER: Okay. Thank you,
2 Mr. Ferguson. Timothy Smith

3 Whereupon,

4 MR. TIMOTHY SMITH,
5 of lawful age, testified as follows:

6 JUDGE REGISTER: Can you state and spell
7 your name for the court reporter?

8 MR. T. SMITH: Timothy D. Smith. Last
9 name is S-m-i-t-h.

10 JUDGE REGISTER: And your address?

11 MR. T. SMITH: 400 Highway 32 East,
12 Stockton, Missouri.

13 JUDGE REGISTER: And you're a customer
14 of Empire District Electric Company?

15 MR. T. SMITH: Yes, ma'am, I am.

16 JUDGE REGISTER: Thank you, Mr. Smith.
17 Please proceed with your comments.

18 MR. T. SMITH: I guess I want to speak
19 out in opposition to raising 20 percent the
20 utility bills in the Stockton area as well as
21 the entire area that Empire has. The reason
22 I would like to do that are for three
23 specific reasons.

24 One, I believe that there are
25 inefficiencies within Empire themselves that

1 could be better maintained, better controlled
2 for better cost-conserving purposes.

3 I'll give you a personal experience. I
4 generally don't have any problem with
5 Empire's service. For the record, I own two
6 businesses in Stockton. They are -- Stockton
7 is a small town on a big lake.

8 We're primarily a tourist attraction,
9 which means we have to gather all our money
10 in during the summer so that we can pay our
11 bills for the winter when no one's around.

12 I run two motels in Stockton. I own two
13 of them. Last summer, I had some problems
14 with some trees that cut some sewer lines
15 behind the motels. The trees were also in
16 some electrical lines.

17 I asked Empire to come out, take a look,
18 see what we could do to take care of this
19 problem. Two or three days later, I didn't
20 get any response, so I called Empire back,
21 and I asked them the same thing. The
22 receptionist told me they would call me back.
23 Three days later, I asked -- called Empire
24 and asked the same thing.

25 This went on for two and a half weeks.

1 Meanwhile, I'm not able to rent the rooms,
2 and I'm losing revenue. Finally, I got
3 pretty irate, and I called Empire. I said --
4 you know, I didn't swear. I don't do that.

5 I said, "This has been going on two and
6 a half weeks with the promise that somebody
7 would at least give me a phone call back,
8 telling me when they could come out, take a
9 look at this problem, and help me with it. I
10 have yet to receive a response."

11 The next day, I got a phone call from a
12 person who identified themselves as a
13 supervisor at Empire, and they chewed --
14 proceeded to chew -- excuse me. I've got to
15 slow down here. I'm trying not to get
16 emotional. Sorry.

17 He proceeded to chew me out. How dare
18 did I have the audacity to call them up and
19 get mad at them for not returning my phone
20 call? I couldn't believe it. I pay \$16,000
21 a year in electricity to this company, and
22 they're calling me up, wanting to know why I
23 got mad.

24 When the company that they subcontract
25 to did show up to cut the trees out, they cut

5 It took them two days to take two trees
6 out. And I sat there and watched them work.
7 One hour, they'd work. One hour, they'd sit.
8 I'm not kidding. I'm serious.

10 MR. T. SMITH: One hour, they'd work.
11 The next hour, they'd go to lunch. I'm not
12 real pleased because we as consumers and
13 business owners indirectly pay for that. So
14 I believe there are some things that we can
15 do -- that Empire could do to increase their
16 efficiency.

17 Another area, the second point, is the
18 matter of rebates. I called them today. "Do
19 you offer rebates for conservation, things
20 that we can do to conserve energy in our own
21 businesses, our own houses?" "No, sir we
22 don't."

23 I've replaced my hot water heaters to
24 more efficient models. I've replaced my air
25 conditioner to a more efficient model. I've

1 insulated my hot water pipes. I've insulated
2 my hot water tanks. I'm getting washers and
3 dryers that are more efficient.

4 I'm doing everything I can to cut my
5 cost so I don't have to pass the cost on to
6 the people who rent rooms from me. And yet I
7 have absolutely nothing but a higher bill to
8 pay for if this goes through.

9 So I think there could be some things
10 done from Empire's standpoint to help educate
11 people, to help encourage conservation,
12 besides raise the price.

13 The third item, and probably the most
14 unemotional and probably most important
15 thing, is what I would call the multiplier
16 effect. It may cost \$10.50 for the average
17 resident as an increase. It's going to cost
18 me close to \$200 a month.

19 I can do one of three things. I can
20 absorb the cost and try to make it through
21 the winter when no one's around and I don't
22 have business.

23 Or I can do like other big business such
24 as, you know, other big companies, fast food,
25 you name it, and pass the cost along at a

11 So it's going to be additional. And
12 there's going to be an additional when they
13 go to get gas. It's going to be an
14 additional when they buy a hot dog. It's
15 going to be additional. So I don't think
16 it's just a straight, across-the-board \$2.50.

20 (Applause.)

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1 (Applause.)

2 MR. T. SMITH: They won't be -- I'll go
3 to some other place. That's all I've got.

4 JUDGE REGISTER: Questions for
5 Mr. Smith?

6 CHAIR LUMPE: No, thank you.

7 MR. DUFFY: I would encourage you to
8 talk to Mr. Palmer about your tree and
9 service situation.

10 MR. T. SMITH: I will do that.

11 JUDGE REGISTER: Luisa Warner.

12 Whereupon,

13 MS. LUISA WARNERMCKEE,
14 of lawful age, testified as follows after
15 affirming:

16 JUDGE REGISTER: Please give me your
17 full name for the court reporter and spell it
18 for me, please.

19 MS. WARNERMCKEE: My full legal name is
20 Luisa J. WarnerMckee. And it's Luisa,
21 L-u-i-s-a, J initial, W-a-r-n-e-r-M-c-k-e-e.

22 JUDGE REGISTER: And what's your
23 address?

24 MS. WARNERMCKEE: 725 North Prospect,
25 Webb City, Missouri, and I am an Empire

1 customer.

2 JUDGE REGISTER: Do you prefer to be
3 called Miss Warner or Miss Mckee?

4 MS. WARNERMCKEE: Just Luisa'll be fine.

5 JUDGE REGISTER: Okay. All right,
6 Luisa. Please proceed with your statement.

7 MS. WARNERMCKEE: All right. Why I came
8 was, do you know -- what's it been, two or
9 three years ago? -- the Missouri residents
10 voted down a minimum wage raise because they
11 were told, "Hey, if you take a raise on
12 minimum wage, everything will go up. If you
13 don't keep the minimum wage, why, then things
14 will stay, you know, below, and you'll make
15 out better."

16 So they voted their own minimum wage
17 down. They all figured it'd be cheaper. But
18 do you know what's happened? It's terrible.
19 The young people, they don't make much money.
20 And you consider the utility bills.

21 I have a handicapped man that lives
22 across from me, 400 a month. Do you know
23 what the State pays the handicapped? The low
24 minimum wage, way below minimum wage. And
25 they cannot afford this.

1 I can't afford it. I'm on Social
2 Security. I got a \$5 raise this year. Now,
3 you stop and think about that. That's good
4 money, \$5. But I'm telling you, I cannot
5 believe that I've got to put another five and
6 maybe more to pay electric.

7 Now, that ain't all. I paid more on
8 gas. I paid more on gasoline. I paid more
9 on food. I paid more on electricity, and I
10 cannot afford all these raises. I mean, 20
11 percent. What is 5 percent of \$300? I mean,
12 you know, what is it?

13 You stop and think. We cannot afford
14 it. And then the -- this re -- what is it
15 called? -- reconstruction. I left my papers
16 up there.

17 JUDGE REGISTER: Reconstruction or --

18 CHAIR LUMPE: Restructuring.

19 MS. WARNERMCKEE: Restructuring, okay.
20 I don't mind the fact that they built a new
21 electric plant for this state. But I do not
22 say that they should sell electricity to
23 other states. Now, how much profit is their
24 shareholders making? How much salary do they
25 have? I mean, really. Can't they look at

1 their own pockets?

2 And you stop and think about it. Are
3 the shareholders paying any money for this to
4 go out, or are we going to pay so that they
5 can branch out and sell electricity away from
6 us and raise our electric bill? That's
7 stupid.

8 We need a company for Missouri, and I --
9 listen, I've got no complaints about Empire's
10 service, none whatsoever. Understand, I'm
11 not against that. But I am against them
12 getting profits that we can -- we don't get
13 this with cost of living.

14 And the poor little young kids, like the
15 woman said, they can't even get a raise in
16 their minimum wage because of being talked
17 into voting this down. This is terrible.
18 And they shouldn't be able, with their
19 salaries and stuff, with them -- they should
20 not be able to make a profit.

21 And I'll tell you another thing. I've
22 thought about it. I've still got gas --
23 gasoline -- kerosene lanterns, you know, that
24 we had when I was young. Now, if I turn all
25 my electricity off except for what I need for

1 the refrigerator or stuff like that and use
2 kerosene, it's going to be back to you go to
3 bed --

4 MR. WHEELER: That's what we should do.

5 MS. WARNERMCKEE: -- you go to bed when
6 the sun goes down. You get up when the sun
7 goes up. And you don't use electricity. My
8 God, that light bulb costs money. You think
9 about it.

10 My folks told me that, too. So we used
11 kerosene, and I -- the lanterns. And it's
12 about what it's come to because you can't
13 afford anything.

14 I mean, they have got to take into
15 consideration how much profit does the
16 company make? How much is their salary
17 compared to what our salaries are? And not
18 just us on Social Security, but the young
19 people. Do you realize what's happening to
20 them? How can they get a pay raise even?

21 Stop and think about it. We're all
22 stuck in this business. And gas got raised,
23 but the Electric's saying, "But, oh, look,
24 they've raised our gas, and we've got to
25 make -- we've got to have more money because

1 they raised our gas bill." Who do I tell
2 "But they raised my gas; I want you to give
3 me more money"?

4 Do you understand? Why not knock the
5 profits down? I mean, how much profit do
6 they make? How much salary do they make?
7 Can they take a cut in their salary? You
8 know what I'm saying? This is ridiculous.

9 JUDGE REGISTER: Thank you very much for
10 coming. Any questions for Luisa? Thank you
11 very much for coming.

12 MS. WARNERMCKEE: Oh, one more thing.
13 I'm sorry. Back when I was young -- now,
14 this is going to date me -- but back when I
15 was young, they had a Commission that put a
16 price cap on utilities. Now, this was during
17 the war years. You know, we had war and
18 stuff, and they started raising stuff during
19 the war, prices.

20 Well, the Commission came and in and
21 said, "You will not raise another thing.
22 Things are going to stay just like they are."
23 That went for water, electricity, gas, and
24 everything. They put a cap on it and
25 wouldn't let anybody raise anything any more.

1 I mean, it stayed that way for quite a number
2 of years. Why can't you do that?

3 (Applause.)

4 JUDGE REGISTER: Thank you for coming.
5 Dolly (ph.) Rose.

6 MR. ROSE: I don't care to speak.

7 JUDGE REGISTER: Thank you very much.
8 Sandy Smith.

9 Whereupon,

10 MS. SANDY SMITH,
11 of lawful age, testified as follows:

12 JUDGE REGISTER: Please spell your name
13 for us.

14 MS. SMITH: S-a-n-d-y S-m-i-t-h.

15 JUDGE REGISTER: And what is your
16 address, please?

17 MS. SMITH: 405 North Eleventh,
18 Sarcoxie, Missouri.

19 JUDGE REGISTER: And are you an Empire
20 District Electric Company customer?

21 MS. SMITH: I am, and two sons are.

22 JUDGE REGISTER: Okay. Please go ahead
23 with your statement.

24 MS. SMITH: For one, I live in Sarcoxie.
25 I've been there 15 years. My mother died

1 there. She'd lived there 12 years. And I've
2 had poor service, and I've had good service
3 from Empire. I have two sons. Both of them
4 own automotive companies in Joplin. Both of
5 them are Empire. I'm trying to start a
6 little bird service.

7 And for one, this is the last service.
8 I paid \$300 to get a new service in. They
9 tell me it's going to be ten days to three
10 weeks. Well, you know, on this kind of
11 account, I think that if they would get some
12 of these services in just a little bit
13 faster, then they could get more money. I
14 mean, I'd pay my bill a little bit faster if
15 I had the service in.

16 I had this flock of birds, and last
17 winter, my electric went out for three days.
18 And I called them, and she said, "Well, can't
19 you move these birds?" And it's no. I mean,
20 these are exotic birds worth \$3500. You
21 going to take those birds out in the snow?

22 And I told her, I said, "If I could move
23 these birds, I wouldn't have to worry about
24 your electric." And it took me three days.

25 And when they found out what it was, a

1 tree had fell down on my neighbor's power
2 line, and all they had to do was switch a
3 little switch. I think that electric is high
4 now. I mean, you know, I just -- I think
5 these people are right.

6 I think that we ought to have these
7 people do a little bit more towards what we
8 have now than expanding far out where we
9 ain't -- where we're not.

10 I'm country people, you know, and I
11 think these country people deserve the break,
12 not people in some other state we don't even
13 know. We deserve the break because we're the
14 ones that's paying. I just don't know what
15 else to say.

16 JUDGE REGISTER: Thank you very much.
17 Any questions for Ms. Smith? Mary Ann
18 Simrell. I'm sorry. I'll let you spell it
19 for the court reporter.

20 Whereupon,

21 MS. MARY ANN SIMRELL,
22 of lawful age, testified as follows:

23 JUDGE REGISTER: And could you --

24 MS. SIMRELL: I am Mary Ann Simrell,
25 S-i-m-r-e-l-l. I live at 708 Parr, P-a-r-r,

1 Sarcoxie, Missouri. I am retired, on a fixed
2 income. There is no way I can afford this 20
3 percent increase.

4 I have an all-electric house. And my
5 electric bill is high enough the way it is
6 right now. And when I use my air conditioner
7 in the summertime, it's way over \$100 a
8 month. And I don't get any raise.

9 Maybe if I could get a raise, 2 percent,
10 well, then they'd take it from my
11 hospitalization because I have a tie-in
12 policy. I'm not lucky like a lot of people
13 that's on Medicaid, and they get all their
14 bills paid.

15 But I'm on a fixed income, and I worked
16 all my life and retired from service to be
17 able to take care of myself. But if they're
18 going to raise everything like this, people
19 can't afford it.

20 The young people are just -- both man
21 and wife. It takes both of them for -- to
22 live today. And any time they raise the cost
23 of living, why, the next day, the groceries
24 and everything will go up at least a third.

25 And maybe it don't become effective for

1 90 days. That's what the cost of living did
2 last time. So it doesn't help nobody. It
3 hurts everybody. And I'm on a fixed income,
4 and I hope that this raise does not pass.

5 JUDGE REGISTER: Are there any questions
6 for Miss Simrell? Thank you very much,
7 Miss Simrell. Okay. The next witness is
8 Richard, and the last name starts with S.
9 And you're from Sarcoxie.

10 MR. SALYER: Salyer.

11 JUDGE REGISTER: Thank you very much,
12 Mr. Salyer.

13 Whereupon,

14 MR. RICHARD SALYER,
15 of lawful age, testified as follows:

16 JUDGE REGISTER: Thank you very much,
17 Mr. Salyer. Can you spell your last name for
18 us?

19 MR. SALYER: My name is Richard Salyer,
20 S-a-l-y-e-r. I reside at 204 South Ninth
21 Street in Sarcoxie, Missouri.

22 JUDGE REGISTER: And you're a customer
23 of --

24 MR. SALYER: Yes, I'm a multiple
25 customer.

1 JUDGE REGISTER: Please go ahead with
2 your statement.

3 MR. SALYER: I reside in the city as
4 both a businessman and a private citizen, and
5 I also represent the city as an alderman.

6 And when I got the notice in the mail
7 that our electric bills were going to go up
8 20 percent, it immediately sent me into a
9 panic as I had -- we had just finished our
10 budget for the city. Our fiscal year ends
11 May 1st.

12 And, you know, I immediately thought,
13 "What's this going to do to me?" Well, what
14 it's going to do is it's going to raise our
15 water and sewer rates over there because we
16 cannot afford to operate our funds -- or our
17 system anymore on what we have -- on what
18 Empire's going to raise our bills to at this
19 point.

20 We're guessing right now it's going to
21 cost us anywhere from 12- to \$20,000 to the
22 city. The franchise fee does not cover cost
23 to the city. I want everybody to realize
24 that this is not just up front. This is
25 everything on the back side.

1 MR. SALYER: And all I know is what we
2 see in the papers. You know, I can quote
3 figures I've seen, and I don't know those are
4 true, you know. And I appreciate you guys
5 being here, I really do, because I get
6 hammered every day down there on city
7 council.

8 I mean, they nail me about everything
9 from dogs to tree limbs. And, you know, I
10 get the gripes on you guys about the limbs
11 and trees and the whole six (sic) yards. And
12 I realize what it's like being in the public
13 eye constantly.

14 But we try -- in the city, when we go to
15 raise something, what we try to do is we've
16 got to look at everybody involved, and say,
17 you know, "Is it fair for everybody?" And if
18 it's not, than we don't do it. And I think
19 that's what we need to do in this situation.

20 I can agree with you that we probably
21 need a new power plant, but I think you need
22 to figure out where you can cut costs on the
23 back side and bring them in to the public
24 light and say, "You know, maybe we did screw
25 up.

1 JUDGE REGISTER: And what's your
2 address, Mr. Bruce?

3 MR. BRUCE: 802 South Brownell in
4 Joplin.

5 JUDGE REGISTER: And you're a customer
6 of Empire District Electric Company; is that
7 correct?

8 MR. BRUCE: Yes, ma'am.

9 JUDGE REGISTER: Please proceed with
10 your statement.

11 MR. BRUCE: I'm opposed to a rate
12 increase unless there can be some type of
13 objective and competent independent counsel
14 who can investigate Empire and determine that
15 there is a financial need.

16 And if that can be done and if there is
17 a need and if there is no other way to cut
18 costs, I would favor as much as a 5 percent
19 increase. And I think anything in excess of
20 that should come from the State and not the
21 consumer. And that's my thoughts.

22 JUDGE REGISTER: Are there any questions
23 for Mr. Bruce? Thank you very much for being
24 here. Alvy Wilson. Alvy Wilson? Craig Dunn.

25 Whereupon,

1 MR. CRAIG DUNN,
2 of lawful age, testified as follows:

3 JUDGE REGISTER: Thank you. Can you
4 give your name and spell it for the court
5 reporter, please?

6 MR. C. DUNN: Craig Dunn, D-u-n-n.

7 JUDGE REGISTER: And your address is?

8 MR. C. DUNN: 9693 West Farm Road 156,
9 Republic.

10 JUDGE REGISTER: And are you a customer
11 of Empire District Electric Company?

12 MR. C. DUNN: Yes, I am.

13 JUDGE REGISTER: Thank you, Mr. Dunn.
14 Please proceed.

15 MR. C. DUNN: I think it's interesting
16 being here tonight because, like, I've never
17 met this guy from Stockton, and I have a
18 story tonight that goes hand in hand with
19 his, showing the inefficiencies that Empire
20 has in its business service, let alone coming
21 before us and asking for more money.

22 I have just a quick example about an
23 entity here in Missouri which is a perfect
24 example of what's going on. And that is the
25 State of Missouri.

1 Last year, the State of Missouri had a
2 budget of 17 billion dollars. They had a
3 deficit last year of over 300 million
4 dollars. Now, the budget for this year,
5 though -- they've brought before the
6 legislature a budget for 18.5 billion, one
7 and a half million (sic) more.

8 And some of the members of the State's
9 solution for this is, "Let's just increase
10 our sales tax, our fuel tax, et cetera.
11 Let's make the people pay for what we're
12 spending."

13 And they're forgetting about the concept
14 that should be at the fore of their spending,
15 which is being held accountable for spending
16 our money wisely in the first place.

17 One quick example is last year the
18 Missouri Department of Transportation had a
19 cell phone bill of \$800,000. And that's one
20 department within the state, and that's
21 throughout the whole state. They had no
22 control.

23 And, unfortunately, I see the same thing
24 happening with Empire Electric. And I got a
25 taste of the carelessness and wasteful

1 spending of my money just three weeks ago.

2 On March 28, I came home, and they had
3 spent the day topping the trees by a power
4 line that goes to my transformer and that
5 lies across the fence separating my 40 acres
6 and the neighbor's 5 acres.

7 To my disgust, I came home the next day,
8 and they had spent that next day totally
9 clearing the brush on her side of the fence,
10 halfway up our yards. And in the process,
11 they crossed my fence, cut down 19 of my
12 trees at the ground in my yard.

13 That night and the next day, no one from
14 Empire Electric had a good answer for me.
15 And on the third day, March 30th, that same
16 crew came back and continued clearing out the
17 brush on the neighbor's side of the fence.

18 I stayed home from work that next day,
19 for over half of the day, to be sure that
20 they would not be trespassing again onto my
21 property.

22 For over half a day, I watched a minimum
23 of three guys piddling around, cleaning out
24 brush, taking chain saws, cutting down at the
25 ground a little brush -- not trees which is

1 what affects the power lines -- in the
2 neighbor's property. And part of the time,
3 they were sitting around, doing nothing.

4 That crew spent three days on a strip of
5 land that was 400 feet in length. When I
6 asked Empire Electric if this was customary
7 to pay their contract to help people clean
8 their brush out of their fence rows, they
9 said yes. If the owners requested or allowed
10 them to do it, they did it.

11 Well, there's two things here that just
12 infuriate me about Empire Electric and their
13 operations. One is the fact that they have
14 never apologized for trespassing and damaging
15 my trees. They refused to compensate me for
16 their damage.

17 And I'm now wasting my time and money
18 preparing for a lawsuit against Empire
19 Electric and Shade Tree Service Company,
20 which is the service company that cut down my
21 trees.

22 Because of their reckless behavior and
23 pure laziness in tracking down the owner of
24 the property across the fence, they're going
25 to be paying me in a lawsuit for damages that

1 I'm certain to win.

2 The second thing that infuriates me is
3 that they are allowing contract companies to
4 take on personal cleanup jobs for people,
5 allowing them to charge their bill to Empire
6 Electric, who in turn is charging me and now
7 trying to get rate increases to cover such
8 foolishness.

9 This is ludicrous. And this is a
10 perfect example of what is happening at the
11 State's level. They're not being held
12 accountable for their current spending and
13 their management of the current funds.

14 And, in turn, they want us, the people
15 who pay the bills, to pay even more to cover
16 their reckless spending. This is not right
17 and needs to be stopped now.

18 (Applause.)

19 JUDGE REGISTER: Are there any questions
20 for Mr. Dunn?

21 COMMISSIONER SIMMONS: Just one thing,
22 Mr. Dunn. When did the incident occur with
23 the trees being cut down? How long ago was
24 that?

25 MR. C. DUNN: March 28th of this year,

1 about three weeks ago.

2 COMMISSIONER SIMMONS: Thank you, sir.

3 JUDGE REGISTER: Mr. Duffy?

4 MR. DUFFY: Nothing.

5 JUDGE REGISTER: Thank you, Mr. Dunn,
6 for coming and speaking. Joy Thompson.

7 Whereupon,

8 MS. JOY THOMPSON,
9 of lawful age, testified as follows:

10 JUDGE REGISTER: Can you give us your
11 name and spell it for us?

12 MS. THOMPSON: Joy, J-o-y Thompson,
13 T-h-o-m-p-s-o-n.

14 JUDGE REGISTER: And what's your
15 address, Ms. Thompson?

16 MS. THOMPSON: 2331 Patterson Avenue,
17 Joplin.

18 JUDGE REGISTER: And are you a customer
19 of Empire District?

20 MS. THOMPSON: Yes.

21 JUDGE REGISTER: Please proceed with
22 your comments.

23 MS. THOMPSON: Well, I don't think my
24 comments are -- they're not going to be too
25 significant. I'm a retired person, and I'm

1 here really on behalf of -- I know that
2 people -- there aren't -- it's not just
3 retired people who are on fixed incomes.

4 My husband keeps telling me that
5 everybody's on a fixed income. But a fixed
6 income means no prospect for change. And I
7 understand fully, then, when people
8 understand that there's going to be a 20
9 percent raise here and they've already had
10 their gas bills more than doubled, which they
11 did, that they just have this feeling of
12 being covered up.

13 Just where are they going to go? I
14 had -- I looked up some figures. And the
15 Joplin Metro Area has 147,000 people. In
16 that number, the people 65 and above
17 constitute 14 percent of the 147. That means
18 there's almost 21,000 people just in the
19 Joplin Metro Area who are 65 and above.

20 And I know that that puts them on a
21 fixed income. And I just feel like Empire's
22 placing an impossible burden on people, not
23 just retired people, but all of us. And I
24 think the people before me have expressed it
25 better, but I just wanted to echo it.

1 JUDGE REGISTER: Are there any questions
2 for Ms. Thompson? Thank you, Ms. Thompson.
3 Elvin Dunn.

4 Whereupon,
5 MR. ELVIN DUNN,
6 of lawful age, testified as follows:

7 JUDGE REGISTER: Please state and spell
8 your name for the court reporter.

9 MR. E. DUNN: My name is Elvin Dunn,
10 E-l-v-i-n D-u-n-n.

11 JUDGE REGISTER: And, Mr. Dunn, can we
12 get your address?

13 MR. E. DUNN: 2957 South State Highway N,
14 Republic, Missouri.

15 JUDGE REGISTER: And you're a customer
16 of Empire District Electric Company?

17 MR. E. DUNN: I am.

18 JUDGE REGISTER: Okay, Mr. Dunn. Please
19 proceed with your comments.

20 MR. E. DUNN: In fact, I have been a
21 customer of Empire Electric since October of
22 1962. And during that course of time, I've
23 had my own residence.

24 I'm on a farm out there as well as two
25 rentals, presently my residence and a rental

1 property with Empire during this course of
2 time. And I think I've been a good customer,
3 looking at my bills over the years.

4 I recently purchased another farm just a
5 quarter mile from where I live. And on this
6 farm is a -- well, 120 acres, but 80 acres
7 lays on one side of the road. Presently,
8 Empire Electric services my residence and my
9 house where I live.

10 And they have a power line running a
11 quarter mile on west on road -- Highway 160
12 that dead-ends there. It serves nobody. I'm
13 the only one that serves on that quarter
14 mile. So I thought this is very nice. I
15 purchased this farm.

16 And we've been a good customer, and
17 Empire will work with me -- and they will --
18 in extending my -- I'd like to extend the
19 service one quarter of a mile onto the new
20 property I just purchased, which is half --
21 midway on the 80 acres.

22 So I called just recently and -- to get
23 a price quote for doing this service. And
24 this would be extending -- adding three or
25 four poles on a quarter mile service.

1 And the quote I received -- and this was
2 the best quote, I'm assuming, all conditions
3 being favorable -- that it would cost me
4 \$6,000 to get the service -- the poles
5 extended on this quarter of a mile.

6 And so on the other end of the property,
7 there is a competitor that has power up to
8 that end of the property. Again, they would
9 only have to come a quarter mile from their
10 side up to where I want to first put the
11 well.

12 And then two or three years down the
13 road, my son who just spoke plans to build
14 over there. But anyway, I approached the
15 competitor to see what it would cost to build
16 a power line.

17 And the reason I'm addressing this, part
18 of the rate structure we're talking about
19 here is talking about construction costs.
20 And I'm concerned about the construction
21 costs of Empire Electric. As I approached
22 the competitor from the other end to get a
23 quote from them, they will extend the service
24 a quarter mile in for me.

25 And I've never been a customer of this

1 company. The bottom line net cost, which I
2 figure after initial cost and anything I
3 might get back, my net cost would be \$700.
4 Now, something tells me there is a problem in
5 productivity, efficiency somewhere. 6,000
6 compared to \$700. Now, that's, you know, a
7 reason to be concerned.

8 So in my opinion, before being granted
9 an increase, they need to start by working on
10 their own productivity and deficiencies,
11 because I have been an accountant for
12 industry. I've worked in industry.

13 I know when we get into cost binds, we
14 look at how to cut costs. You know, you
15 can't just -- to be competitive -- you know,
16 maybe they're not competitive. They don't
17 have to be. It appears to me they don't
18 really want any other customers. The other
19 company wants it.

20 (Applause.)

21 MR. E. DUNN: The other company still
22 wants customers, okay? There's a difference
23 there. And in manufacturing, to stay in
24 business, you have to be competitive. You
25 can't just raise costs if you want to stay in

1 business because it's a free market.

2 Evidently, they have something going for
3 them that free enterprise doesn't have to be
4 able to do this. So, again, if a
5 manufacturing company didn't look at how to
6 improve their own efficiency and
7 productivity, they wouldn't stay in business.

8 So with that in mind, I would like to
9 summarize by simply saying that now, just as
10 \$6,000 cost appears to be excessive to extend
11 the service for one quarter of a mile
12 compared to the \$700, so does the 19.3
13 percent seem to be excessive. It wouldn't be
14 fair to just ask those in attendance how many
15 received a 19.3 percent increase, period.
16 They don't. Why should they? Thank you.

17 (Applause.)

18 CHAIR LUMPE: Mr. Dunn, can you tell me
19 who the competitor --

20 MR. E. DUNN: I didn't -- I didn't know
21 if I could put it in here. I didn't figure
22 it was material. But it is a fact.

23 CHAIR LUMPE: I was just curious if it
24 was a co-op.

25 JUDGE REGISTER: It tells us whether

1 they're regulated or not.

2 MR. E. DUNN: It is a co-op. Any other
3 questions?

4 COMMISSIONER SIMMONS: No, thank you,
5 sir.

6 JUDGE REGISTER: Thank you, Mr. Dunn.
7 Jackie Davis.

8 MS. DAVIS: No. I'm going to sign up
9 back there.

10 JUDGE REGISTER: Thank you, Ms. Davis.
11 Harry Gann. Harry Gann. They're going to
12 look for him, and I'll go ahead and call
13 Treva (ph.) starts with a P. P-a-v-h-n.

14 MR. GANN: He passes.

15 JUDGE REGISTER: Mr. Gann is going to
16 pass on us here. Treva Paul or Pavhn (ph.).
17 Paul Fleming.

18 MR. FLEMING: No comment. The issues
19 have already been raised.

20 JUDGE REGISTER: Thank you very much,
21 Mr. Fleming, for being here. Charlotte
22 Harrington. Okay. Miss Harrington is going
23 to pass at this point. Reverend Raymond
24 Richter.

25 REVEREND RICH, SR.: Rich. What

1 everybody wants to be, especially Empire
2 Electric.

3 Whereupon,

4 REVEREND RAYMOND RICH, SR.,
5 of lawful age, testified as follows:

6 JUDGE REGISTER: And could you state and
7 spell your name for the court reporter?

8 REVEREND RICH, SR.: Reverend Raymond A.
9 Rich, Sr. I live at 10882 Ridgeway Circle,
10 Granby, Missouri, 6418 -- 64844-7225. I am a
11 customer of Empire Electric and a dissatisfied
12 customer.

13 JUDGE REGISTER: Go ahead with your --

14 REVEREND RICH, SR.: We had a storm
15 Easter morning at 1:30. Power went out.
16 That's when the clocks stopped. I'm used to
17 that. A couple years ago we were out for
18 three weeks. I'm used to that. I'm used to
19 Empire's repair work. And I'm quite
20 prepared.

21 I filled up all my water cans at the
22 service station in Neosho. I've got about
23 ten of them, seven-gallon water cans, because
24 the well goes out, your toilet goes out,
25 everything, your furnace goes out, your phone

1 goes out. We have cell phones. So I
2 hardshipped it Sunday.

3 Monday came. I went to town. I saw
4 some Empire Electric people working. I asked
5 them. They informed me that the priority was
6 Neosho. Well, Neosho had very little storm
7 damage. It was south of Neosho and over in
8 Granby area.

9 And I just saw a few trees down in
10 Neosho. Evidently City Hall and the power
11 light wasn't -- the traffic light wasn't
12 working on Coler Avenue (sic) and the
13 intersection there. So Empire Electric
14 concentrated their efforts, and their
15 priority seemed to be Neosho.

16 Well, they didn't get to Granby for a
17 while. So I asked the guy. They said, "Oh,
18 it will be three or four days before we get
19 out to you."

20 And he informed me that Empire Electric
21 had laid off 300 employees, and the employees
22 that they had out working the storm damage
23 didn't know what they were doing.

24 They had no direction. They just were
25 leaderless. So after getting these negative

1 reports from all these service personnel, I
2 attempted to call the emergency 1-800 number
3 of Empire Electric and got the buzz off.

4 So being knowledgeable, I immediately
5 contacted the Missouri Public Service
6 Commission and informed them of my problems.
7 They acknowledged them and told me they would
8 contact Empire Electric and get back to me.
9 I explained to them I was on a cell phone.
10 My battery was going down. I had to go out
11 to my car and charge it back up, but I would
12 call them back later on.

13 Several hours went by, and I saw a
14 supervisor in a white pickup from Empire
15 Electric come out my road. I live three
16 miles west of Granby off of Highway 60.

17 And just on the far edge of my property,
18 my neighbor had three trees knock the power
19 line down. I could see that. And one of the
20 community wells that serves the area had a
21 power line that was cracked, and the lines
22 was dangling. I could see that.

23 Out on the highway, they have a little
24 generator, an emergency generator that kicked
25 on and supplied some customers out there that

1 owned some chicken houses. I could hear
2 that.

3 And the supervisor drove around, and he
4 left. And here about an hour later came two
5 power trucks with the upright lifts, a pole
6 truck bringing three telephone poles, a
7 tractor-trailer with a backhoe and a loader
8 on it, and they commenced to work.

9 So I called Missouri Public Service, and
10 they informed me that they had contacted
11 Empire Electric, and Empire Electric was
12 going to get right on the job, which they
13 did, after the Missouri Public Service
14 Commission called them.

15 They didn't do anything for me. But for
16 you, they did. We had power that night.
17 But, again, the employees that were working
18 out there were leaderless. They didn't know
19 what they were doing. The trucks left a
20 couple times, come back carrying the poles.

21 I don't know. You know, they laid off
22 300 employees as a cost-cutting effective
23 measure to save money. But yet they buy
24 power from the Grand Dam Association and from
25 the other power companies at South.

1 They have a huge power transformer
2 station in Neosho on Highway 71 which was
3 affected on the storm due to the damage on
4 south Highway 71. But that regulates their
5 power.

6 They buy power that comes from the Grand
7 Dam Authority when they don't have enough
8 power in this area. And that power station
9 supplies the main power line for Joplin. So
10 I can imagine -- I can realize why they were
11 prone to work on that first.

12 The newspaper editor for the Newton
13 County paper in Granby called Empire Electric
14 and asked them when he was going to get his
15 power on. Most of the city of Granby had
16 power, but the newspaper office didn't.

17 And he was informed that the priority
18 was Neosho. And the man said, "Do you know
19 I'm the editor of the Newton County News?"
20 And Empire Electric told him, "Well, we don't
21 really care who you are. Neosho has the
22 priority."

23 Well, he had to have his grandfather --
24 his wife's grandfather bring a generator over
25 to get the paper out. And needless to say,

1 generate enough income to pay their salaries.

2 MR. WHEELER: Amen.

3 (Applause.)

4 REVEREND RICH, SR.: Because they're not
5 efficient in operation. Their services are
6 poor. You call up, and you get a busy
7 signal. You get a computer. People are
8 getting tired of calling up and talking to
9 computers. They want to talk to a human.

10 (Applause.)

11 REVEREND RICH, SR.: You call up the
12 emergency line, and you get a computer, and
13 it puts you on hold. You don't get an
14 answer. Pretty soon, it disconnects you.
15 You get a busy signal.

16 What's the use of having an emergency
17 line if somebody isn't there to answer it?
18 That's supposed to be an emergency. I'm a
19 disabled veteran. I have to have a breathing
20 device to sleep at night.

21 Three nights I didn't have it. I didn't
22 sleep. I slept in my recliner, sitting up,
23 dozing, because I couldn't lay down and
24 breathe because my power was off. Now, I
25 have a priority, too, but evidently not as

1 much as a traffic signal in Neosho did.

2 I mean, you know, they have priorities.
3 The priority first is supposed to be -- I
4 realize they're a monopoly. They have no
5 competition. But the priority first is
6 supposed to be the consumer. We're their
7 customer. We pay their salaries. We pay
8 their bills.

9 AUDIENCE MEMBER: That's right.

10 REVEREND RICH, SR.: That's how they
11 operate.

12 (Applause.)

13 REVEREND RICH, SR.: And if they don't
14 serve us, they're not serving the state or
15 the public. And the state Public Service
16 Commission needs to look at the operation of
17 the Empire Electric Company and its
18 executives.

19 Why do they have so much overhead? Why
20 can't they operate within their budget? Why
21 did they make -- what's their profit margin?
22 I mean, all of this, I realize, is going to
23 be looked at in the legal fanatics (sic) with
24 the lawyers.

25 But to get down to the common person, we

1 have so much money, and we have to budget our
2 income. Our outlay is more than our income.
3 And they keep wanting more and more and more,
4 and they keep going to the public trough,
5 wanting more.

6 I mean, we're subsidizing everybody in
7 the world, but I really don't think we need
8 to subsidize the Empire Electric Corporation
9 just because they couldn't get their merger
10 and get more profits, just because they need
11 to sell more electricity and just because
12 they need to get their employees who --

13 I think some of the people that
14 testified favorably for Empire Electric are
15 either employees or retirees from Empire
16 Electric. They're not customers.

17 (Applause.)

18 REVEREND RICH, SR.: They're not
19 customers. They're not consumers. They're
20 employees. They're getting a paycheck from
21 Empire Electric. That's why they testified
22 favorably, including the gentleman from the
23 Chamber of Commerce. He's probably a
24 representative of Empire Electric on the
25 Chamber of Commerce.

1 I'm a customer. I get no subsidy from
2 Empire Electric, but I get no service from
3 them either. I had to go to the Missouri
4 Public Service Commission to get them to fix
5 my power. And I thank you for your prompt
6 reply, and I thank you for your -- I thank
7 you for making them do what they're supposed
8 to do. And I hope you continue to do so.

9 And that's all I have to say before I
10 get too emotional. I have to go to a
11 meeting. I'm a correspondent for the 48
12 (sic), and they're not going to have their
13 minutes taken if I don't get there.

14 JUDGE REGISTER: Reverend, give us an
15 opportunity to ask a few questions if there
16 are any.

17 REVEREND RICH, SR.: Yes, ma'am.

18 JUDGE REGISTER: Are there any questions
19 for Reverend Rich?

20 COMMISSIONER SIMMONS: I do have one,
21 Reverend. First of all, thank you for coming
22 down. I appreciate your testimony. Could
23 you tell me how far Granby is from Neosho?

24 REVEREND RICH, SR.: Approximately eight
25 miles.

1 COMMISSIONER SIMMONS: Eight miles. And
2 could you give me a proximity of how far that
3 is from here in Joplin?

4 REVEREND RICH, SR.: It's about 24 four
5 miles south. Well, if you go 71 Highway,
6 it's about 24 miles south to Neosho. If you
7 go the old 71 Bypass -- it's 59 Highway
8 now -- south, it's about 28 miles to Granby,
9 26 miles. It's eight miles from Neosho to
10 Granby.

11 And some of the area down there is
12 serviced by New-Mac, which is a co-op, which
13 New-Mac raised their rates. They have higher
14 rates than Empire, but I understand their
15 service is -- they -- their customers had
16 their electric service back on before we did.

17 And some of the people, I understand,
18 still are having difficulties with service.
19 And I know in the past I have suffered
20 without service for up to three weeks.

21 JUDGE REGISTER: Reverend Rich, does the
22 company -- is the company aware that you have
23 a breathing machine that you're --

24 REVEREND RICH, SR.: I told them so. I
25 told them it was a medical emergency, and

1 they told me it would be three or four days.
2 That's when I called the Public Service
3 Commission.

4 COMMISSIONER SIMMONS: Thank you, sir.
5 We don't want you to be late.

6 REVEREND RICH, SR.: Thank you again
7 for your prompt reactions.

8 (Applause.)

9 JUDGE REGISTER: Stanley Moffett.

10 Whereupon,

11 MR. STANLEY MOFFETT,
12 of lawful age, testified as follows:

13 JUDGE REGISTER: Thank you very much.
14 And can you state and your spell your name
15 for the court reporter?

16 MR. MOFFETT: I'm Stanley Moffett,
17 M-o-f-f-e-t-t.

18 JUDGE REGISTER: Okay. And your
19 address, Mr. Moffett?

20 MR. MOFFETT: It's Route 7, 5161 Cameo
21 Lane, Joplin.

22 JUDGE REGISTER: And you're a customer
23 of Empire District Electric Company?

24 MR. MOFFETT: Yes, I am.

25 JUDGE REGISTER: Thank you, Mr. Moffett.

1 Please proceed with your statement.

2 MR. MOFFETT: Thank you. Yes, I -- I
3 know that you guys don't care about this.
4 But my mom and dad, I've got to help them.
5 Both of them draw about \$700 a month on
6 income. Dad's in the hospital now, and they
7 expect him to pass away. So mom will have
8 one income, and she cannot make it.

9 I've got to help them out now because
10 their pills is about \$500 a month. Now, can
11 any of you live on that? No. And I'm
12 cutting out on my budget to help them. So
13 what are we supposed to do? Go back to old
14 times and all three families live in one
15 house? That's what it's coming to.

16 So what's all these older people on
17 fixed incomes going to do? Have any of you
18 got an answer on that? Just please stop and
19 think about the older people that are going
20 to have hardly any money. They worked all
21 their lives real hard to get what they've
22 got, and they're going to have to give it up
23 just for the raise if it pass.

24 And it's not fair, because, like I say,
25 I'm digging myself plus trying to help them.

1 I'm disabled. And like I said, my folks. So
2 I don't know what my folks are going to do if
3 my dad passes away and my mom's on one
4 income. It's impossible. And I thank you.

5 COMMISSIONER SIMMONS: Thank you, sir.

6 JUDGE REGISTER: Any questions for
7 Mr. Moffett?

8 JUDGE REGISTER: Thank you, Mr. Moffett.

9 (Applause.)

10 JUDGE REGISTER: Jane Daniels.

11 Whereupon,

12 MS. JANE DANIELS,
13 of lawful age, testified as follows:

14 JUDGE REGISTER: Please state your name
15 for the court reporter and spell it for her.

16 MS. DANIELS: My name is Jane Daniels,
17 D-a-n-i-e-l-s.

18 JUDGE REGISTER: And what's your
19 address?

20 MS. DANIELS: 1815 South Picher, Joplin,
21 Missouri.

22 JUDGE REGISTER: Are you a customer of
23 Empire District?

24 MS. DANIELS: Definitely.

25 JUDGE REGISTER: Okay. Please proceed.

1 MS. DANIELS: Let me see. All right.
2 When I bought my house six years ago, my
3 father had died, and my 80-year-old mother
4 lives with me. And so I'm working. And I
5 immediately went into emergency conservation
6 in my house. I got on the level payment plan
7 with the utility companies and -- because we
8 budget. We have to.

9 It got to the point, you know, it was
10 kind of high on that as it went up. Anyway,
11 I refinanced my house and put new windows in
12 it to make sure that I had double-paned
13 windows.

14 I would really love to meet Empire's
15 customer who only uses 700 kilowatts an hour
16 because I do practice conservation. I don't
17 want to say they're being dishonest, but to
18 me, they're very suspect in the fact that
19 they base this on 700 kilowatt hours of
20 electricity a month.

21 They don't mention their summer rate,
22 how it's going to affect that. We live in a
23 state where -- you know, I work for R-8
24 School District. I don't think I could get
25 up and go to work every day if I couldn't

1 sleep at that night. And I've been
2 air-conditioned for the last 30 years. I
3 can't sleep in this humidity.

4 I don't begrudge the gentlemen their
5 seven or eight times my salary. But I think
6 they should consider it's these people like
7 me who are paying that salary. And you've
8 got to be careful who you step on on the way
9 up because you're going to meet them on the
10 way back down. I just --

11 MR. WHEELER: What goes around comes
12 around.

13 MS. DANIELS: By this increase, on top
14 of what the gas company did, they have
15 effectively probably knocked me out of a
16 raise this year because of what it's done to
17 the school district.

18 They're going to have to get the money
19 to pay the utilities somewhere. So where are
20 they going to take it? They're going to take
21 it on the employees' backs, those of us who
22 can't fight back.

23 I could have been or should have been
24 able to retire next year, but I can't. I
25 will keep working as long as I can for as

1 long as my mother lives because I have her to
2 take care of.

3 And it's unfair what -- and I know you
4 people, to me, have got to be the watchdogs
5 between the monopolies and the citizens. I'm
6 proud to be American, and I support my
7 country, but, darn, I get tired of being
8 walked on.

9 It comes out in the paper that
10 there's -- people are going to use more gas
11 this summer. Right here, immediately, it
12 jumps in two days. The gas company -- I'm on
13 the level payment plan. My level payment
14 plan went from \$65 to 165. Is that level for
15 me, or do you -- you know, you just change it
16 as you go along?

17 We need some rules. I don't know how
18 these people on a fixed income who have no
19 children to help them survive -- if my mother
20 did not live with me, with her medication she
21 takes, she would have to choose between
22 eating, staying warm, or having her
23 medication. It's terrible that we have put
24 the American people in this situation by
25 monopolies.

1 MR. WHEELER: Amen.

2 (Applause.)

3 MR. WHEELER: It's not fair.

4 MS. DANIELS: These people built this
5 country.

6 MR. WHEELER: They've died for this
7 country.

8 MS. DANIELS: Now, maybe we don't wear
9 suits. We're blue-collar workers. We don't
10 go and have lobbyists in Washington. Maybe
11 if we could afford some lobbyists, people
12 would take and pay attention to the
13 working-class American who has been steadily
14 beat down and beat down.

15 It just seems real strange to me, we
16 have a change in government, and all of a
17 sudden, anything that is related to natural
18 resources goes out of sight.

19 MR. WHEELER: Amen.

20 MS. DANIELS: Especially when that
21 change in government has made their money in
22 that area. Guys, stay on top of it. We need
23 you. We don't have anybody but the Public
24 Service Commission to stick up for us. And I
25 applaud you for what you're doing.

1 (Applause.)

2 JUDGE REGISTER: Ramona Evans.

3 Now remember, we're going to let
4 Ms. Evans testify here, so keep the comments
5 to the podium.

6 Whereupon,

7 MS. RAMONA EVANS,
8 of lawful age, testified as follows:

9 JUDGE REGISTER: Thank you. And could
10 you state your full name and spell it for the
11 court reporter?

12 MS. EVANS: R-a-m-o-n-a Evans,
13 E-v-a-n-s. I live at 17329 Jackpine Road in
14 Carthage, Missouri, which is a country road.
15 I, too --

16 JUDGE REGISTER: And you're a customer
17 of Empire?

18 MS. EVANS: Yes, yes.

19 JUDGE REGISTER: Please proceed.

20 MS. EVANS: I, too, signed in up here
21 thinking it was a sign-in sheet, and I wasn't
22 going to say anything, but I decided that I
23 would.

24 JUDGE REGISTER: Thank you.

25 MS. EVANS: First of all, I want to say

1 that I'm a long-time customer of Empire.

2 And, actually, I hate to say it, but I
3 remember before Empire when we did have the
4 kerosene lamps that some of you spoke about.

5 I would much hate to give up my Empire
6 service. I kind of like my TV, and I kind of
7 like my internet, and I kind of like my
8 telephones that run off of it. I much
9 appreciate Empire. But at the same time, I'm
10 frustrated. I wanted to make a couple of
11 comments that I agree with Mr. Piercy's pill.

12 I think that when our utilities
13 continuously go to the Commission and ask for
14 a rate increase, knowing that they're asking
15 for double what they really want and you guys
16 will give them at least half. "Oh, you
17 naughty boys, you can't have the whole thing,
18 but we'll give you half." That's still not
19 fair.

20 And I know there's people that's
21 supposed to stick up for us. I think
22 Mr. Meyer over here, if I've got the
23 description at the beginning, is the one
24 that's paid to stand up for us as citizens.

25 COMMISSIONER SIMMONS: Mr. Coffman.

1 MS. EVANS: Stand up for us, Mr. Meyer.

2 COMMISSIONER SIMMONS: Mr. Coffman.

3 MS. EVANS: Coffman. I got the wrong
4 name, I'm sorry. Stick up for us.

5 And like this lady said, you know, I
6 would really like to go out and build me a
7 new house, and I would like to have a brand
8 new car and then go tell my boss, "Well, now
9 I've got to have this. You're going to have
10 to give me a 20 percent increase on my
11 salary." He'd laugh me right out of the
12 office.

13 (Applause.)

14 MS. EVANS: I don't have a problem with
15 Empire, and I hope to heck I don't have one
16 after tonight. But I respect these guys for
17 what they do. And I have good as much as --
18 and I've had brownout problems where it does
19 affect my utilities, but that's not why I'm
20 here tonight. And I'm not here to complain
21 against Empire.

22 They're a stockholder company. They're
23 answerable to their stockholders. They've
24 got to give those stockholders dividends on
25 their stocks every year, and I understand

1 that. But I think the constant, constant,
2 constant of all of our utilities, not just
3 Empire, of asking for raises and you guys
4 granting it needs to stop. It needs to stop.

5 If it's not going to stop, stick to the
6 2 percent or whatever the national average
7 is. You know, like her raise is governed on
8 and most of us who do work, Social Security
9 is governed on the same thing. Make them
10 stay into that guideline.

11 And, sure, there's chaff in their
12 company. There is in every company. There
13 is in every job. There is a tremendous bunch
14 of chaff in Social Security, and we all know
15 that. But these guys have got to make a
16 profit, too, in order to stay in business.
17 And we all need them. We all need them.

18 I resent the heck out of the \$7.50 fee
19 that they stick on us. And that happened
20 when they were going to build a -- I don't
21 know where it came from. I don't know if
22 they even had approval from you-all to do it.
23 But there's a \$7.50 monthly fee stuck on
24 every meter before any electricity's paid
25 for.

1 I guess the only other thing I've got to
2 say is that I am opposed to the rate increase
3 as they've asked for it, full well knowing
4 that probably we're all here barking at the
5 wind tonight because you guys will make a
6 decision on legal grounds for a rate
7 increase. If you don't, they'll be right
8 back at you, and like she said, they'll be
9 asking for double, knowing that you'll give
10 them half of that.

11 I think I just really want to ask the
12 Commission to be responsible, be responsible
13 for the citizens as well as the companies.
14 And they have to make a profit. I understand
15 that. But think about the guys that's paying
16 the bills. And it is tough. It is tough to
17 live in a budget with what we have to work
18 with now.

19 And -- whatever you said his name was --
20 be responsible.

21 MR. COFFMAN: Coffman.

22 MS. EVANS: Be responsible for standing
23 up for the citizens and listen to what was
24 said tonight and don't just say, "Oh, well,
25 that was just another town meeting, and we

1 had a bunch of yokels come out there and blow
2 off steam," all right? We have. But listen
3 to what we're saying because it's serious,
4 and it's got to stop.

5 (Applause.)

6 JUDGE REGISTER: Howard Blackburn.

7 Whereupon,

8 MR. HOWARD BLACKBURN,

9 of lawful age, testified as follows:

10 JUDGE REGISTER: Okay. Would you --

11 MR. BLACKBURN: Blackburn, B-l-a-c-k-b-u-r-n.

12 JUDGE REGISTER: What's your address,

13 Mr. Blackburn?

14 MR. BLACKBURN: 1112 West Daugherty in
15 Webb City.

16 JUDGE REGISTER: And you're a customer
17 of Empire District?

18 MR. BLACKBURN: Yeah, have been for 30
19 years or better.

20 JUDGE REGISTER: Please go ahead with
21 your comments.

22 MR. BLACKBURN: I'm not no businessman.
23 I've never been in business in my life. I'm
24 too freehearted to be in business; I'd give
25 everything away. But I understand that

1 there's got to be a profit. There's got to
2 be all that stuff.

3 And I know why they've got these
4 computers to answer the machines -- or answer
5 your phone calls. Because they can buy a
6 computer for 5- or \$600, and you ain't going
7 to pay nobody to work for you for a year for
8 5- or \$600. I do know that because, I mean,
9 I wouldn't even work for that.

10 But I, at the same time -- when they
11 asked for a 19, 20 percent raise -- well, I
12 got a letter, first of all, here at the first
13 of the year from the government. I'm a
14 disabled veteran. They said I got me a great
15 big raise this year, two and a half percent.
16 You know, what it amounted to, I got a \$3
17 raise, \$3 a month.

18 I'm employed by the school system. I've
19 got -- they said the board -- they have to go
20 before the board in order to get a raise.
21 The board approved a two-and-a-half percent
22 raise. Well, that did not mean that
23 everybody got that two-and-a-half percent
24 raise. I got about two. But the overall
25 percentage got the two and a half percent.

1 But all these rate increases on gas, the
2 water, the sewer, the electric and all that
3 stuff, that affects my ability to get a raise
4 because the school system is on a budget
5 because the State gives them the money to run
6 their business on.

7 All right. And the gas goes up on the
8 fuel prices on the running of these buses.
9 Well, everybody wants their little darlin'
10 kids brought right to their house just about.

11 So they've got to run 25, 30 buses, and
12 that there comes out of it. The State only
13 allows so many trips a day. They don't allow
14 all of these trips. I understand that
15 because I've talked to my boss.

16 But anyhow, what it boils down to is,
17 all these raises for them cuts down on my
18 percentage of getting that 2 percent raise.
19 I don't even get the 2 percent. So they're
20 wanting 20 percent. I don't understand how a
21 guy making -- getting a 2 percent raise is
22 going to continue paying a 20 percent
23 increase on everything that he got.

24 Every time I go to the grocery store,
25 they don't ask me where I work and what kind

1 of percentage of a raise I got. When I pay
2 for my groceries, I have to pay the full
3 fare, see. I don't get a discount.

4 And that's the same way with these
5 companies. They don't ask me where I work,
6 you know. They send me my bill, and if I
7 don't pay my bill, they turn my service off.
8 So why should they be able to get a 20
9 percent raise, and I get a 2, you know?

10 All these other people -- I mean, my gas
11 bill -- they said the gas bill was going to
12 go up -- I think mine went up something like
13 40 something percent or something like that.

14 Anyhow, they said it was supposed to
15 take effect the 26th of this one particular
16 month. Well, my bill for that month is set
17 to be paid prior to that date, so my rate was
18 raised before that. I know that because it
19 was something like about double what the last
20 month before that was, the last date's --

21 And, you know, there they know in a
22 monopoly -- a monopoly's actually, according
23 to the federal government, against the law.
24 But there is monopolies just about everywhere
25 you go.

1 There's only one Empire Electric.
2 That's the only power plant they got that
3 goes into Webb City. There's only one gas
4 company that goes into Webb City. You either
5 have that, or you don't have nothing, see?
6 Now, that's a monopoly.

7 There's got to be somebody regulating
8 that power -- or regulating their increases,
9 or sooner or later, they're just going to be
10 there and there ain't going to be nobody to
11 pay the bill, you know.

12 It's great to have all these power
13 lines. I love -- I like to see these
14 electric lights. But what good is it when
15 there ain't nobody there to take care of it,
16 see?

17 Just like this lady can't retire because
18 of having to work. There's a lot of them in
19 the school system, having to keep on working
20 because they've got other people living out
21 and depending on them. And just face it,
22 everybody's on a fixed income.

23 It's fixed because somebody else is
24 getting their rate out of it before you get
25 yours. And we've got to have it stopped

1 JUDGE REGISTER: Thank you, Mr. Creswell.
2 State your name and spell it for the court
3 reporter.

4 MR. CRESWELL: Travis Creswell,
5 C-r-e-s-w-e-l-l.

6 JUDGE REGISTER: And your address,
7 Mr. Creswell?

8 MR. CRESWELL: 106 Hillview, Joplin.

9 JUDGE REGISTER: And are you a customer
10 of Empire District Electric Company?

11 MR. CRESWELL: Yes.

12 JUDGE REGISTER: Thank you,
13 Mr. Creswell. Please proceed with your
14 comments.

15 MR. CRESWELL: Please excuse my
16 overcasual dress here. I usually appear a
17 little more dressed-up. I had to have
18 emergency surgery Friday, so I have loose-
19 fitting clothing. The appendix is a little
20 tight right there.

21 There are a few things I'd like to point
22 out. First of all, I think it's been covered
23 several times, talking about justifying the
24 extra cost.

25 I'm a contractor. I'm a commercial

1 energy efficiency contractor actually. I go
2 into large factories, and I take out many kW
3 worth of energy. At a recent customer's
4 place of business, he was teasing me.

5 He was asking -- "This rate increase is
6 very similar to you coming in, giving me a
7 quote, and then saying in the middle of the
8 job, 'Oh, by the way, I'm going to double the
9 price of the job. You're not going to get
10 any extra benefit from it, and I'm going to
11 take the piece of equipment that I used it to
12 buy with me.'"

13 And that's one of Empire's largest
14 customers. That's how they feel about this.
15 They understand the need for the increase. I
16 do, too. But if they have to sell more
17 kilowatt hours, why do we have to buy a plant
18 to produce those kilowatt hours? They should
19 be able to sell them and make the money off
20 of them.

21 Something else I'd like to talk about is
22 energy efficiency programs. We've all talked
23 about it and complained a lot about high
24 utility bills. Empire, to my knowledge, has
25 made limited effort to help the customers

1 with energy efficiency.

2 There is many things they can do with
3 that, whether or not it be ground source heat
4 pumps, heat pumps, compact fluorescent
5 lighting, energy efficiency programs. You
6 know, Empire in the past has done things like
7 that. In fact, they've contracted me to help
8 them with things like that.

9 The customers were not that interested.
10 In Empire's defense, the customers weren't
11 that interested. Possibly they will be now
12 in needing help. But I'd like to see Empire
13 publicly offer some help for that.

14 And my personal interest is renewable
15 energy. I also do a lot with solar energy,
16 wind energy. And it's not feasible for many
17 people in this room, I will admit. It is --
18 it is not a solution. But it is something
19 that it could be a solution in the future,
20 and it would be nice if we at least asked the
21 customers about it and had some interest in
22 it.

23 One of the last points I'd like to make
24 is in my dealings with Empire, I've been
25 reasonably happy. They are a good company.

1 I don't work for Empire anymore. I have in
2 the past and probably never will again. So
3 don't think that I have any vested interest
4 in sticking up for them here. The --

5 Oh, and I do have one gripe. About a
6 year and a half ago, I started the process of
7 getting my solar energy system approved to
8 intertie with their grid.

9 I followed the chain of command. The
10 first person I talked to said, "No, we won't
11 do that." But he was -- he was wrong. But
12 he was a -- he was just the first person.

13 The second person I talked to said, "I
14 think we do that, but I think the equipment
15 costs you a quarter of a million dollars."
16 The third person who I then -- I'd done my
17 best to follow the chain of command, so I
18 skipped --

19 And in Empire's defense -- it's now been
20 a year and a half since anything's been done,
21 but they have been upside down with this
22 buyout mess. They've been -- most everybody
23 at Empire's been pretty busy getting résumés
24 tuned up.

25 Now that this deal is falling through,

1 it's possible I can get some help. And I
2 don't need to go through anybody right now
3 because I think the ball is in my court. I
4 think they're waiting to get something back
5 from me at this point. But it did take a
6 year before we even had one even pretend
7 (sic) of interest. So that's all I have.

8 JUDGE REGISTER: Just a moment,
9 Mr. Creswell. Let's see if there are any
10 questions for you.

11 COMMISSIONER SIMMONS: I do have one
12 question. Mr. Creswell, you talked earlier
13 about energy efficient programs that were
14 used in the past that are no longer being
15 used. Could you give me an example of what
16 that was?

17 MR. CRESWELL: About four years ago, I
18 was contracted to help with the commercial
19 lighting program to design and implement
20 energy efficiency lighting. That -- that
21 program is what I was involved in.

22 I believe that is still there to a
23 limited degree, but I believe it only focuses
24 on new installation of lighting. I'd be
25 careful about -- but that's what they speak

1 of.

2 The main thing I was speaking of is in
3 times before that, there was something called
4 demand site management that I'm not -- that I
5 was never involved with. And that was a
6 program that I believe is -- I believe the
7 Public Utility Commission forced --

8 CHAIR LUMPE: (Nods head.)

9 MR. CRESWELL: -- forced -- required
10 them to have so many dollars put aside for
11 energy efficiency education. But I'm not
12 very qualified to talk about that.

13 CHAIR LUMPE: Maybe you're referring to
14 integrated --

15 MR. CRESWELL: EIRA?

16 CHAIR LUMPE: I can't think of the
17 initials now, but it was the demand site to
18 enable them to get power --

19 MR. CRESWELL: Correct, correct. The
20 most efficient way is to save energy rather
21 than to build --

22 CHAIR LUMPE: Build.

23 MR. CRESWELL: -- a new power plant.

24 JUDGE REGISTER: Any other questions?

25 COMMISSIONER SIMMONS: Thank you for

1 your testimony.

2 JUDGE REGISTER: Mel Smith.

3 Whereupon,

4 MR. MEL SMITH,

5 of lawful age, testified as follows:

6 JUDGE REGISTER: Can you state and spell
7 your name for the court reporter?

8 MR. M. SMITH: Mel, M-e-l, Smith,
9 S-m-i-t-h.

10 JUDGE REGISTER: And what's your
11 address?

12 MR. M. SMITH: 405 North Eleventh,
13 Sarcoxie, Missouri.

14 JUDGE REGISTER: And you are a customer
15 of Empire District Electric Company?

16 MR. M. SMITH: Yes, ma'am.

17 JUDGE REGISTER: Thank you very much.
18 Please proceed.

19 MR. M. SMITH: Actually, I'm a very
20 disgruntled one. But the thing about it is,
21 gas companies raised their prices up. The
22 government stepped in, investigated it. Why
23 don't you-all investigate them?

24 No. 1, they're not giving you the
25 service they should give you. They're

1 overpaid. They're hiring too many people to
2 start with. I personally at my house have
3 had problems for three years.

4 I have a wire coming from the pole to my
5 meter, and it shocks. When it goes through a
6 live meter, it's alive. I've called for
7 three years. I finally went up, took a pair
8 of dikes, pulled it out and put three rubber
9 hoses to keep it from shocking me.

10 And what do I get from Empire? Nothing.
11 They won't even -- they came out three times,
12 looked at it. "Oh, there's nothing wrong
13 with that." Any idiot knows better.

14 We called Empire and talked to five
15 different people to get one more meter put
16 out there on a business we're trying to put
17 in. And if you've got to go through five
18 different people and then you call up there,
19 and they're going to tell you it's going to
20 be ten days before you get your service in?
21 I cannot see this.

22 So where are -- where is the service?
23 Why aren't we been -- going through the
24 problem of investigating them? That's where
25 you've got to go. As far as the Commission

1 giving them a 17 percent raise, you know it's
2 stupid.

3 They know it's stupid. But they think
4 the people are stupid. We all know they want
5 10 percent. They don't want 17 percent. But
6 it's all a big game. And that's all I want
7 to say.

8 JUDGE REGISTER: Thank you, Mr. Smith.
9 Are there any questions for Mr. Smith?
10 Violet Wilson. Violet Wilson. Okay. Mike
11 (sic) Murphy.

12 Whereupon,

13 MR. WARREN MURPHY,
14 of lawful age, testified as follows:

15 JUDGE REGISTER: Thank you, Mr. Murphy.
16 Will you state and spell your name for the
17 court reporter?

18 MR. MURPHY: It's Warren Sam Murphy,
19 M-u-r-p-h-y.

20 JUDGE REGISTER: And your address,
21 Mr. Murphy?

22 MR. MURPHY: 526 North Sergeant, Joplin,
23 Missouri.

24 JUDGE REGISTER: And are you a customer
25 of Empire District?

1 MR. MURPHY: Yes, ma'am.

2 JUDGE REGISTER: Please proceed with
3 your comments.

4 MR. MURPHY: Well, I'm disabled. I'm a
5 disabled vet, and I'm on a fixed income.
6 When they started talking last year about the
7 gas hike, they said it was going to be, like,
8 a 5 percent hike.

9 Well, my bill went up -- I'm on
10 appropriation. I pay the same every month.
11 My gas bill went from 42 to \$159. They
12 didn't say anything about it. They just
13 jacked it.

14 And now, like, we're coming into the
15 time of year where the electricity goes up to
16 a higher level. Then if they go up there and
17 they hit it with a 19 percent increase,
18 that's going to hang me out to dry. I have a
19 wife and three children.

20 I have people -- I'm representing the
21 500 block of North Sergeant tonight. And
22 I've got people there who make \$60,000 and
23 some that make 4- or 5,000. But all of them
24 agree on the same thing. They think it's
25 kind of high. And when it all comes at once?

1 There's three families on the block
2 alone that are on fixed incomes. They get
3 1300 a month. It's going to kill them. So
4 if there's some way it could be worked, if
5 they have to have a hike, can it be phased in
6 or figure out a way it can't be hit all at
7 once, because the gas company just jacked it.

8 And they won't -- for the next six
9 months, we have to pay that amount, and then
10 they'll reinvestigate it after that. They
11 didn't give us an opportunity to fight it.
12 That's just the way it is. And that's about
13 all I have to say.

14 JUDGE REGISTER: Any questions for
15 Mr. Murphy? Thank you. David Caldwell.

16 Whereupon,

17 MR. DAVID CALDWELL,
18 of lawful age, testified as follows:

19 JUDGE REGISTER: Please state your name
20 and spell it for the court reporter.

21 MR. CALDWELL: David Caldwell,
22 C-a-l-d-w-e-l-l.

23 JUDGE REGISTER: And what is your
24 address, Mr. Caldwell?

25 MR. CALDWELL: 614 West Glen,

1 Marionville, Missouri.

2 JUDGE REGISTER: And are you a customer
3 of Empire District Electric?

4 MR. CALDWELL: Yes, ma'am.

5 JUDGE REGISTER: Please proceed with
6 your comments.

7 MR. CALDWELL: Well, my concern has
8 been, as spoken several times here, is the
9 rate increase. You know, 20 percent, almost.
10 We've had a 40 percent on gas.

11 My expenses -- I'm retired -- and my
12 expenses are energy, food, and my taxes. I
13 own my home, so that leaves -- at least until
14 I have to hock it to pay these bills. But if
15 you -- if you raise -- if you allow this kind
16 of increase, then it's going to raise
17 everything.

18 I mean, you're raising the rate of
19 inflation. I may get a bigger raise down the
20 road, but it's going to be awhile. I'm on
21 Social Security. I got two and a half
22 percent last year. That's no way near what
23 I'm having to pay on increase.

24 And I don't know -- you're putting the
25 squeeze on us people that -- that are on

1 fixed -- well, you're putting the squeeze on
2 everybody because the working man's going to
3 have to have a raise to pay the bills.

4 What are we going to do with this
5 increase in the inflation rate? And that's
6 what it is -- what it amounts to. And
7 another power plant and all that -- I
8 understand we need more power as we've got
9 more people and everything.

10 But if I start a business, I don't go
11 out and ask the people that I'm going to
12 serve to give me the money up front to build
13 that business.

14 Isn't this power plant going to pay for
15 itself? Shouldn't it pay for itself out of
16 what it generates? Why do we have to pay for
17 it up front? And that's what it looks like
18 we're doing. That's my comments.

19 JUDGE REGISTER: Are there any questions
20 for Mr. Caldwell? Thank you, Mr. Caldwell.
21 Willis Vernet.

22 MR. VERNETT: I don't care to speak. I
23 think you've pretty well covering everything.

24 JUDGE REGISTER: Thanks for being here,
25 Mr. Vernet. Sandy Lefler. I'm not sure I'm

1 pronouncing that right.

2 MS. LEFLER: You did great on trying.

3 Whereupon,

4 MS. SANDY LEFLER,

5 of lawful age, testified as follows:

6 JUDGE REGISTER: Can you state and spell
7 your name for the court reporter?

8 MS. LEFLER: Sandy, S-a-n-d-y, Lefler,
9 L-e-f-l-e-r.

10 JUDGE REGISTER: And what is your
11 address, Ms. Lefler?

12 MS. LEFLER: 119 East Splitlog Street,
13 Goodman, Missouri, 64843.

14 JUDGE REGISTER: And you're a customer
15 of Empire District Electric?

16 MS. LEFLER: Yes, ma'am.

17 JUDGE REGISTER: Please proceed with
18 your comments.

19 MS. LEFLER: I'm just here to say I'm a
20 poor person. And in my town of Goodman, I
21 hear other people agreeing. We need help in
22 saving each penny we can.

23 And we all appreciate electricity. And
24 I know when my lights have been off, I always
25 say, "Thank you, Lord," when Empire gets out

1 to restore the service.

2 We appreciate each and every one who
3 helps us all. And each member of the panel,
4 I'm sure you'd much rather be home watching
5 Miami Vice, eating popcorn or whatever. You
6 have a thankless job.

7 But the -- the new kid on the business
8 block out on 71 Highway -- and we just got
9 the ribbon cut last Friday on the new
10 highway -- I visited with him and told him I
11 was coming up to the public hearing and if he
12 had any comments.

13 And he said, "Well, just tell them that
14 I'm trying to get a business established in
15 the little town of Goodman" -- and I call it
16 Excitement City, U.S.A. We just are in favor
17 of saving each penny we can.

18 Thank you all so much for listening to
19 all of our complaints.

20 JUDGE REGISTER: Any questions for
21 Ms. Lefler?

22 CHAIR LUMPE: Thank you for coming.

23 COMMISSIONER SIMMONS: Yes, thank you
24 for coming. How big is Goodman? About how
25 many people?

1 MS. LEFLER: Approximately a thousand
2 people.

3 COMMISSIONER SIMMONS: A thousand
4 people. All right. They would be proud of
5 you tonight.

6 MS. LEFLER: Do you think so? I hope.

7 (Applause.)

8 MS. LEFLER: I served on their city
9 council a few years ago. And it takes each
10 us to go to a public meeting. And, you know,
11 we can all discuss any problem.

12 COMMISSIONER SIMMONS: Thank you for
13 being here.

14 MS. LEFLER: Thank God for everybody who
15 has good ears.

16 JUDGE REGISTER: Thank you.

17 MS. LEFLER: You're welcome. Oh, one
18 additional comment. It's like this: My mom
19 and daddy taught me to go to church when I
20 was a little child.

21 And it bothers me that I wish my
22 paycheck was bigger each time I find the door
23 unlocked to enter and make my way to the back
24 pew because that's simpler than waiting on a
25 nice gentleman to extend his arm to get me to

1 the back pew sometimes.

2 I lost my train of thought. I have --
3 multiple sclerosis is my problem. I haven't
4 been drinking. Thank you all.

5 JUDGE REGISTER: Thanks so much for
6 being here.

7 MS. LEFLER: You're welcome.

8 JUDGE REGISTER: Ervin Barnett.

9 Whereupon,

10 MR. ERVIN BARNETT,
11 of lawful age, testified as follows:

12 JUDGE REGISTER: Can you state and spell
13 your name for the court reporter?

14 MR. BARNETT: Ervin Barnett, E-r-v-i-n
15 B-a-r-n-e-t-t.

16 JUDGE REGISTER: And what is your
17 address, Mr. Barnett?

18 MR. BARNETT: 222 South Highway 60,
19 Marionville, Missouri.

20 JUDGE REGISTER: And you are a customer
21 of Empire District?

22 MR. BARNETT: For the last 30 years.

23 JUDGE REGISTER: Thank you, Mr. Barnett.
24 Would you please proceed with your statement?

25 MR. BARNETT: I didn't really come to --

1 to talk. But I have a business in
2 Marionville and have for the last 30 years.
3 And my electric bill has steadily went up.
4 And the bill -- and the highest, probably,
5 bill I pay in the summertime will run \$800.
6 But with a 20 percent increase, that's 200
7 more for my business to either absorb or pass
8 on.

9 And I can see they probably need a
10 raise, but I think 20 percent is a little
11 high. And I didn't really come to discuss
12 this even, but I just wanted to hear what was
13 going on. And that's about all I have. I
14 just feel that that's a -- far too much to be
15 all put on at one time.

16 JUDGE REGISTER: Okay. Are there any
17 questions for Mr. Barnett? Linda Davey.

18 Whereupon,

19 MS. LINDA DAVEY,
20 of lawful age, testified as follows:

21 JUDGE REGISTER: And state and spell
22 your name for the court reporter.

23 MS. DAVEY: Linda Davey, L-i-n-d-a
24 D-a-v-e-y.

25 JUDGE REGISTER: And what is your

1 address, Ms. Davey?

2 MS. DAVEY: 2510 South Picher Avenue in
3 Joplin, Missouri, 64804.

4 JUDGE REGISTER: And you're a customer
5 of Empire District Electric Company?

6 MS. DAVEY: For 26 years.

7 JUDGE REGISTER: Please proceed with
8 your comments.

9 MS. DAVEY: Okay. First of all, I'd
10 like to thank you for taking the time to at
11 least address this issue. And in response
12 to -- some of these people talked about the
13 stockholders. We're real uptown. We own ten
14 shares of stock.

15 However, Empire showed very, very poor
16 disregard when they quit handling the stock.
17 They mail them in a plain envelope. They did
18 not register these. They did not advise us
19 they were coming in the mail. I know one man
20 that had \$75,000. It came in seven
21 envelopes. Anybody could have walked --

22 But that's neither here nor there. We
23 have -- we have had problems with the -- with
24 our electric before -- in this past storm
25 when our lights went out.

1 The first person I called was St. John's
2 Hospital. I said, "Is your pilot having a
3 problem? He has circled my house three
4 times." "We have no auxiliary power on our
5 heliport."

6 I said, "Lady, tell him to go about 200
7 feet forward and move to the right about a
8 block and a half and set it down on the
9 street and call an ambulance to bring him to
10 the hospital because he's right there."

11 Okay. We called over -- I called Empire
12 immediately, and I got a little lady after
13 about an hour and a half on hold. And I told
14 her, I said, "Ma'am, three main wires that go
15 to St. John's Hospital are down in my back
16 yard." "Well, we'll have someone get out
17 there."

18 Well, they drove up and down 26th
19 Street, and my husband finally walked down
20 there, not knowing if there's any wires down
21 or not. Meanwhile, St. John's three major
22 lines are in our back yard. Well, they
23 finally got somebody out there.

24 And this is almost an insult to this
25 man's intelligence. They had one person in

1 that truck with a boom, and he was up in that
2 tree with those wires, a whole bunch of them.
3 There's about 20 wires, and they all go to
4 that same transformer.

5 He was up there alone. My husband said,
6 "Sir, if you don't mind, I'll sit out here
7 and watch you." He said, "I'd really
8 appreciate it." He said, "How do they know
9 if you're going to need help, or you're in
10 trouble?" He said, "After a while they'll
11 call me and check on me." I thought that was
12 real disregard for somebody playing with that
13 kind of wires.

14 And whenever we had a problem again
15 because they -- the guys that came out, they
16 did what they had to do that night, I
17 understand. But we told them, "There's one
18 limb you're going to have trouble with.
19 Please take it down." "It's okay."

20 The lady across the alley had a guy come
21 out, a personal person. He did it. He said,
22 "I'm not touching that line or wire."

23 Friday afternoon, boom, a ball of fire
24 bigger than our garage goes out of the
25 transformer. We're out of power. The first

1 thing I do, call St. John's. "Do you have
2 power?" "No."

3 I called Empire. "Well, ma'am, you
4 know, they're really busy." I said, "Lady,
5 does the word 'arcy arcy' mean anything to
6 you? Our house is going to go up in flames
7 if we don't get somebody out here." And a
8 wire had been pulled out.

9 Well, then she sends somebody out here,
10 to our house. Shade Tree came out. They
11 said, "Lady, you're sitting under a
12 bombshell." He said, "We will be here."

13 He went out, got his men, who are
14 already off duty, brought them back to their
15 truck, and commenced to do it. And I think
16 they need to work a little bit on their
17 customer service.

18 As far as Empire's merger going, it was
19 going real fine until they heard the squeak
20 of the wheel. "You're going to lose some
21 benefits, and you're going to lose some
22 money."

23 Boom, the former employees ended that
24 right then. They put their two cents in. It
25 got stopped. They deserved their retirement.

1 They worked for it. But it's too bad that
2 they had to mention that before they took a
3 negative issue.

4 And as far as the source for the energy
5 for generating our electricity over in
6 Riverton, why can't we, like, be like other
7 parts of the country and use the garbage to
8 burn to make the energy rather than with
9 natural gas?

10 You'd be eliminating two problems there.
11 Eliminating the gas bill and getting rid of
12 some garbage at the same time. And that's
13 just basically all I have to say.

14 JUDGE REGISTER: Any questions for
15 Ms. Davey? No. Thank you very much.

16 (Applause.)

17 JUDGE REGISTER: Mr. Nichols -- Mr. or
18 Ms. Nichols. I'm sorry, I can't make out
19 your first name. It might be Jeff.

20 Whereupon,

21 MS. M. H. NICHOLS,
22 of lawful age, testified as follows:

23 JUDGE REGISTER: And state and spell
24 your name for the court reporter.

25 MS. NICHOLS: M. H. Nichols,

1 N-i-c-h-o-l-s, and I live in Webb City.

2 JUDGE REGISTER: What's your address?

3 MS. NICHOLS: 1 South Main.

4 JUDGE REGISTER: Okay. And are you a
5 customer of Empire District?

6 MS. NICHOLS: I am.

7 JUDGE REGISTER: Please proceed with
8 your statement.

9 MS. NICHOLS: Thank you. Like an
10 earlier spokesperson, I want to thank those
11 of you who sit on this commission. You
12 certainly have a demanding job. And we
13 appreciate what you are doing, both in making
14 sure that we have adequate energy and we have
15 good service to the people of this state.
16 Thank you so much.

17 When I came, I knew I had questions. I
18 was uninformed. I also appreciated very much
19 finding some information in the material at
20 the back. Your blue brochure, I believe
21 that's something that you publish, and it
22 gave answers that I was looking for. And the
23 yellow sheet, I assume, was the electric
24 company. Is that correct? Also from you.
25 That was very helpful.

1 There are, however, still questions. I
2 came across the term "Praxair." And I've
3 somehow missed that on the business page.
4 I'm not sure what that is, P-r-a-x-a-i-r.

5 MR. DUFFY: That was a large company --

6 MS. NICHOLS: Thank you.

7 MR. DUFFY: -- an industrial company.

8 MS. NICHOLS: Okay. Now, I am aware
9 that the electric companies throughout the
10 country can't control all of those
11 unfortunate things that we experienced
12 lately.

13 They can't control whether or not it's
14 going to be a cold winter or a hot summer.
15 They can't control OPEC. They can't control
16 the fact that 60 percent of our energy
17 sources as far as gas is concern -- oil --
18 crude oil comes from other countries. And
19 that's not something they can -- that they
20 can bargain for.

21 They can certainly anticipate population
22 growth, which we've just had a good head
23 count on. And when they go in to service
24 other areas, of course they know it's going
25 to require more energy.

1 What I guess troubles me most is they --
2 there doesn't seem to be evidence that they
3 plan for these high demand times. And what
4 steps do they take to plan for these kinds of
5 situations when they know they're going to
6 have to have increased capacity?

7 Now, we've seen that they have certainly
8 gone to other areas. I'm trying to remember
9 if there was a hefty rate increase when they
10 went into the Branson area, and I can't
11 remember. 20 percent, I think I would
12 remember. But certainly serving new areas
13 would mean you'd have to have more energy.

14 I'm glad to see that you look at the
15 situation, and they have the opportunity to
16 respond three times a year. Does the rate go
17 down some? Has that happened that the rate
18 actually does go down some?

19 It can go up or down, I understand from
20 your material. And that's good to know. And
21 nobody tells us all that good news. Hey,
22 you're missing a good chance there, folks.

23 I think it is disappointing -- and we're
24 seeing it all across the country -- that many
25 energy companies have not anticipated some of

1 the situations we see, in California and
2 already in other parts of the country.

3 And because it seems to kind of build on
4 itself, unfortunately it tends to suggest --
5 it tends to appear that there's collusion;
6 "We'll take advantage of this. Now is the
7 time we can do that."

8 I hope and trust that that is not the
9 case. That there is just a lapse in
10 preparation for problems that come up, new
11 energy demands that they have not prepared
12 for.

13 But I would hope sincerely, and I think
14 everybody in this room would hope sincerely,
15 that they are looking ahead, that they are
16 somehow anticipating, and that they will
17 continue to be the good corporate citizens
18 that we have come to expect. Thank you very
19 much.

20 JUDGE REGISTER: Thank you very much.
21 Are there any questions for Ms. Nichols?
22 Rebecca Brooks.

23 Whereupon,

24 MS. REBECCA BROOKS,
25 of lawful age, testified as follows:

1 JUDGE REGISTER: State and spell your
2 name for the court reporter.

3 MS. BROOKS: Rebecca Brooks,
4 B-r-o-o-k-s.

5 JUDGE REGISTER: And what is your
6 address, Ms. Brooks?

7 MS. BROOKS: 614 Web, Duenweg, Missouri.

8 JUDGE REGISTER: And you're a customer
9 of Empire District Electric Company?

10 MS. BROOKS: Yes.

11 JUDGE REGISTER: Can you tell us where
12 Duenweg is?

13 MS. BROOKS: I just moved here. It's
14 just east of Joplin.

15 JUDGE REGISTER: Okay. Please proceed
16 with your statement.

17 MS. BROOKS: Okay. I wasn't going to
18 speak tonight, but then I heard a few of the
19 elderly speaking about the young people. And
20 I thought that maybe you need someone that's
21 in the younger crowd to say what they're
22 feeling.

23 Just like a lot of the elderly, we are
24 in a -- on a fixed income. And it takes two
25 incomes, sometimes more. If you work minimum

1 wage jobs, you need at least three or four
2 incomes to be able to survive because you
3 figure the general amount for rent in the
4 area is \$400 a month.

5 That is more than one quarter income if
6 you're minimum wage. And then whatever you
7 figure that an electric bill is going to
8 shoot up, nearly 20 percent. That's going to
9 be over \$100 a month. That's if you're
10 conservative with your electricity. At
11 least -- you figure at least \$100 a month.

12 And then with the high gas prices and
13 everything combined, just to survive, the
14 young families, if they have children or even
15 if they're just starting out on their own,
16 they cannot survive with all the high prices
17 thrown together. And it's forcing people to
18 live in a way that they can't survive without
19 going on Welfare.

20 And it's a shame that the government is
21 either forcing families apart to be able to
22 get government assistance or that we have to
23 go to government assistance just to survive.
24 And it's a shame how they take so much out of
25 us to where we feel like we've got to work

1 ourselves to death, and we've never going to
2 be able to put aside for our retirement ages.

3 And then come to find out, when we hit
4 our retirement ages, we're still in the
5 bottom section. And it's just not right.
6 And I just thought that you might want to see
7 how the young people are feeling about it,
8 too.

9 JUDGE REGISTER: Let me see if there are
10 any questions.

11 COMMISSIONER SIMMONS: I think you
12 shared with us a very good side that we
13 needed to hear. Thank you very much.

14 JUDGE REGISTER: Thank you. There are
15 no more witnesses at this time.

16 MS. WILSON: Ma'am, I'd like to speak.

17 JUDGE REGISTER: All right. What's your
18 name?

19 MS. WILSON: June Wilson, W-i-l-s-o-n.

20 JUDGE REGISTER: Come right on forward,
21 Miss Wilson.

22 Whereupon,

23 MS. JUNE WILSON,
24 of lawful age, testified as follows:

25 JUDGE REGISTER: I believe you just

1 stated your name and spelled it for us, so
2 I'll ask you what your address is.

3 MS. WILSON: 447 South Blair Drive,
4 Joplin.

5 JUDGE REGISTER: And are you a customer
6 of Empire District Electric Company?

7 MS. WILSON: For 23 years.

8 JUDGE REGISTER: Let me make sure. You
9 did get the spelling on that, didn't you?
10 Okay. Please proceed.

11 MS. WILSON: Like so many others, I did
12 not intend to talk tonight. It has been a
13 very revealing hearing. Almost as revealing
14 as the hearing at Jefferson City when Empire
15 retirees traveled up to intervene on their
16 own behalf because retirees worked at low
17 wages when they were working.

18 Many worked before wages increased.
19 Their salaries -- I mean their pensions,
20 their Social Security was based on the lower
21 income so that they were also on a fixed
22 income.

23 But that is not why I'm here. I think
24 Miss Casey (sic) -- if she is still here --
25 was certainly misinformed. As intervenors,

1 parties to the merger, we received, I believe
2 it was a 53 page -- what did we call it?
3 The --

4 MR. DUFFY: Order.

5 MS. WILSON: What? Order?

6 JUDGE REGISTER: Yeah, order. Just say
7 that.

8 MS. WILSON: Yeah. An order concerning
9 the merger. Miss Casey was very misinformed.
10 The merger, itself, was approved. It was the
11 regulatory plan that was not approved for
12 more than one reason. There were various
13 reasons.

14 The fact of the retirees intervening
15 into the case had nothing to do with the
16 merger regulatory plan. Therefore, I hope
17 everyone in the room goes away knowing that
18 the retirees did not cause the merger to
19 fail. After all, retirees have quite a bit
20 in Empire stock. They would have liked to
21 have seen that merger succeed.

22 We do know that there are times when TV
23 will have on a notice to "Please cut down on
24 your use of your power. Please delay using
25 your washing machines. Try to postpone

1 cooking your dinner so that there won't be a
2 power outage."

3 I do believe that this state line power
4 plant was built to make sure that there would
5 be sufficient power available so that,
6 perhaps, these notices would no longer have
7 to come out to warn people that there could
8 be power outages due to not enough power.

9 The increase in rates, as I understand
10 it, is to pay for the state line power plant.
11 I understand what people are saying, that it
12 seems like rate payers are paying for it in
13 advance.

14 I don't know if loans could have been
15 secured or not. That is up to the officers
16 and the financial director to take care of
17 that kind of thing.

18 But, once again, I did not intend to
19 speak tonight, but I could not let people
20 leave thinking that retirees had caused the
21 merger to fail. That is not true. It is the
22 regulatory plan as the Commission knows.

23 But I do want at this time to thank the
24 Commission. The Missouri Public Service
25 Commission, as you-all have been told by many

1 tonight, is the entity that is between
2 monopolies, utilities, and the rate payer.
3 And we do appreciate your services.

4 JUDGE REGISTER: Thank you, ma'am. Any
5 questions for Ms. Wilson? Thank you so much.

6 If there are no other witnesses, then we
7 will adjourn this hearing. And I want to
8 thank everyone for being present this
9 evening.

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11 (Proceedings concluded at 8:50 p.m.)

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14 (Comments were made after Judge Register
15 adjourned the hearing and, at the request of
16 Judge Register, are not on the record.)

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1 STATE OF MISSOURI)
) ss
2 COUNTY OF NEWTON)

3

4 CERTIFICATE

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6 I, LaVONNE A. LARSEN, Shorthand Reporter
7 and Notary Public within and for the State of
8 Missouri, do hereby certify that I was
9 personally present at the public hearing
10 before the Public Service Commission as set
11 forth in the caption sheet hereof; that I
12 then and there took down in stenotype the
13 proceedings had at said time; and that the
14 foregoing is a full, true, and correct
15 transcript of such notes so made at said time
16 and place.

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20 LaVONNE A. LARSEN
21 Notary Public

22

23 My commission expires: June 16, 2001.

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