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STATE OF MISSOURI
PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

Public Hearing
August 28, 2000
Columbia, Missouri
Volume 4

In the Matter of Union Electric)
Company, d/b/a AmerenUE, for)
Authority to File Tariffs) Case No. GR-2000-512
Increasing Rates for Gas Service)
Provided to Customers in the)
Company's Missouri Service Area.)

BILL HOPKINS, Presiding,
SENIOR REGULATORY LAW JUDGE.

KELVIN SIMMONS,
M. DIANNE DRAINER, Vice-Chair
COMMISSIONERS.

REPORTED BY:

KELLENE K. FEDDERSEN, CSR, RPR
ASSOCIATED COURT REPORTERS, INC.

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

2 JUDGE HOPKINS: Thank you, ladies and
3 gentlemen. If I could have your attention, please,
4 we'll begin this hearing, and I'll ask our court
5 reporter to go on the record, please.

6 If you would like to testify, we've got
7 these sheets in the back there, and we'll be happy to
8 listen to you testify, and we ask that you not speak
9 from the floor because this is a formal hearing and we
10 have a court reporter who, like most of us, can only
11 listen to one person at a time. So we would ask that
12 everybody come down here and you're certainly welcome
13 to speak down here.

14 This is August 28th, the year 2000. It is
15 in Columbia, Missouri. We are at Stephens College.
16 It's 6:30 p.m. My name is Bill Hopkins, and I'm the
17 appointed Senior Regulatory Law Judge for the Missouri
18 Public Service Commission, and I will be the presiding
19 officer this evening in the matter of Union Electric
20 Company, d/b/a AmerenUE, for authority to file tariffs
21 increasing rates for gas service provided to customers
22 in the company's Missouri service area.

23 This case began on February 18th of this
24 year, the year 2000, when Union Electric Company,
25 d/b/a AmerenUE, submitted to the Missouri Public

1 Service Commission tariffs reflecting increased rates
2 for natural gas service provided to customers in the
3 Missouri service area of the company. The proposed
4 tariffs bear a requested effective date of April 2,
5 2001.

6 The proposed tariffs are designed to produce
7 an annual increase of approximately 14 percent in the
8 company's natural gas revenues. That is about
9 \$12 million annually.

10 First let me thank Stephens College for the
11 use of this facility, and I note that the views
12 expressed here are not necessarily those of Stephens
13 College.

14 Let me introduce to you the Commissioners
15 who are present this evening to hear your testimony.
16 This is Commissioner Dianne Drainer. She is the Vice
17 Chair of the Public Service Commission.

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Sir, we're having
19 difficulty hearing you in the back. Is there some way
20 to turn that up.

21 JUDGE HOPKINS: Is that a little better?

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah.

23 JUDGE HOPKINS: Great. Thank you very much.
24 This is Kelvin Simmons, our newest Commissioner from
25 Kansas City. And we will ask the other attorneys here

1 to enter their appearance, and we'll start with the
2 general counsel over here.

3 MR. FRANSON: Robert Franson, Assistant
4 General Counsel for the Staff of the Public Service
5 Commission, P.O. Box 360, Jefferson City, Missouri
6 65102.

7 MR. MICHEEL: Douglas E. Micheel appearing
8 on behalf of the Office of the Public Counsel and the
9 public, P.O. Box 7800, Jefferson City, Missouri
10 65102-7800.

11 MR. BYRNE: Tom Byrne and Susan Knowles
12 appearing on behalf of Union Electric Company,
13 1901 Chouteau, St. Louis, Missouri 63103.

14 JUDGE HOPKINS: Thank you very much. The
15 Missouri Public Service Commission is the state agency
16 which regulates investor-owned utility companies in
17 Missouri to ensure that the rates are just and
18 reasonable, that the quality of service is
19 satisfactory, and that safety practices are employed
20 in their operations while at the same time ensuring
21 the utility companies a reasonable rate of return to
22 their shareholders.

23 The Missouri Public Service Commission's
24 made up of five commissioners who are appointed by the
25 Governor and confirmed by the Senate to hear and

1 decide cases regarding the public utility issues
2 regulated as indicated earlier.

3 The current Commissioners are Chair Sheila
4 Lumpe, Vice Chair Dianne Drainer, Commissioner Connie
5 Murray, Commissioner Robert Schemenauer and
6 Commissioner Kelvin Simmons. The Commissioners,
7 including those who are not currently here tonight,
8 will have the opportunity to read all the witnesses'
9 testimony and remarks.

10 The Public Service Commission employs a
11 staff of engineers, accountants, attorneys, financial
12 analysts and other specialists in the field of utility
13 regulation and relies upon their expertise, along with
14 other expert testimony and consumer testimony. These
15 people here that introduced themselves earlier
16 represent the PSC staff and the Office of the General
17 Counsel and the Office of the Public Counsel.

18 The Public Counsel is separate from the PSC,
19 and the Public Counsel represents the public's
20 interest specifically before the Public Service
21 Commission.

22 The purpose of this hearing is to get your
23 input, to take evidence by way of your statement or
24 testimony or any written statements or documents that
25 you may wish to provide to the Missouri PSC regarding

1 AmerenUE's application for a rate increase.

2 We will take your comments from this evening
3 along with the other public hearings and follow up
4 with a review and a report which will be issued and
5 will include any issues which you may raise with us
6 tonight relating to this proposed rate increase.

7 And I want to emphasize to you that no
8 decision has been made on this rate increase. Part of
9 the process is listening to you people. That's why
10 we're here, specifically to listen to you give your
11 testimony.

12 And I will ask -- I will ask if either of
13 the Commissioners would like to make any opening
14 comments at this time. Commissioner Drainer?

15 COMMISSIONER DRAINER: First, I apologize
16 for distracting our Law Judge. I wanted to move the
17 podium up. And let me just say, when you're called up
18 to give us your testimony, we will make sure that
19 we're clearing a way on both sides so that you have
20 plenty of room. I always get concerned when we seem
21 to have a little bit of cramped quarters. I do not
22 want anyone tripping over any cords. So if you see me
23 jumping up and down moving cords, I just want to make
24 sure it's real safe for everyone.

25 Second of all, for those of you in the back

1 of the room that couldn't hear at first, I am Dianne
2 Drainer. I've been a resident of Columbia since 1974.
3 So, of course, I'm always thrilled to be in my home
4 town.

5 Your testimony is very important to us. It
6 does make a difference. Let me really assure you, it
7 does make a difference. The public meetings that we
8 have like this one is our only opportunity for you to
9 give us your opinion, and that becomes part of our
10 formal record and all the Commissioners will read it,
11 and it has an impact on our decision-making.

12 So please do feel comfortable coming up. Do
13 not be intimidated by the process if you've not been a
14 witness before. You will be sworn in, but we don't
15 really have the attorneys here to interrogate you and
16 to make it uncomfortable for you. They won't do that.
17 Right, you guys won't do that? See, they won't do
18 that. So it's your opportunity to speak to us, and I
19 look forward to hearing from you tonight.

20 I would also like to tell those individuals
21 that might have signed up and they're not really
22 comfortable coming up, if they've heard the opinion of
23 someone else and they agreed with it totally, then
24 come on up, be sworn in and just say that you agreed
25 with Ms. or Mr. so and so.

1 That at least puts on the record that 20
2 people all agreed with Mr. and Mrs. so and so and it
3 gives us that record, and that doesn't take very long
4 for you and does give us the record we need.

5 Thank you very much. I do appreciate you
6 coming out on a hot night like tonight to be with us.

7 JUDGE HOPKINS: Commissioner Simmons?

8 COMMISSIONER SIMMONS: Let me say good
9 evening to each and every one of you. I, too, would
10 like to thank Stephens College for hosting this event
11 tonight. Most importantly, I want to thank each and
12 every one of you for coming out tonight.

13 As it was mentioned earlier, I am the newest
14 Commissioner. I've only been here for a little over
15 two months now. I don't feel like I am a stranger in
16 Columbia because I'm an alumni from the University of
17 Missouri - Columbia, and I've chose to live in
18 Columbia so I'm a resident now also.

19 I want to say that, just like my
20 Commissioner said earlier, it is very important that
21 you testify. It's very important that we hear from
22 you. It does make a difference. I am also a former
23 city council person in the City of Kansas City, and I
24 will tell you that hearings like these, we have them
25 almost weekly, and believe me, we hear you and there

1 are issues that you will bring up that is very germane
2 to the proceeding that's before us tonight.

3 So please feel comfortable and come up and
4 talk to us and tell us what's on your mind. We look
5 forward to it. And again, thank you all for coming
6 out tonight.

7 JUDGE HOPKINS: Do any of the attorneys have
8 any opening statements?

9 MR. BYRNE: Yes, your Honor. I'm Tom Byrne
10 from the company. I just want to say we're here to
11 listen to what you have to say, not to talk tonight,
12 but we do have people here from our customer service
13 department.

14 If, as opposed to commenting on the rate
15 case, you have -- or if in addition to commenting on
16 the rate case you have any questions or problems with
17 your account, they will be available to address those
18 tonight, probably after the formal part of the
19 hearing.

20 MR. MICHEEL: As the attorney representing
21 the public, I would urge all of the citizens who came
22 tonight to testify. That's why my office requested
23 these public hearings so we can get the citizens'
24 input about the proposed rate increase. So please
25 feel free to testify. It is very important.

1 MR. FRANSON: I'm an attorney for the --
2 representing the Staff of the Public Service
3 Commission, and I would emphasize what the
4 Commissioners told you. They do read the transcripts
5 from these hearings, the ones that aren't here. And
6 your only chance to have your views known before the
7 Commission is to come up here and testify, and I would
8 encourage you to do so.

9 JUDGE HOPKINS: Thank you. Like
10 Commissioner Simmons, I'm a Mizzou alumni, and I
11 always took every chance I could to come to Stephens
12 College. So I'm glad to be here tonight.

13 We're going to take the testimony at this
14 time, and this is an official hearing and the
15 statements and testimony of witnesses will be taken
16 down by the court reporter on the record and must be
17 under oath. When your name is called to testify, if
18 you'd come forward down here and stand behind the
19 lectern and I'll swear you in.

20 And we're going to do like baseball, we're
21 going to have an on-deck circle, and I will call the
22 person that will testify after the person at the
23 lectern, and if that person would sit down here and
24 wait, maybe we can speed this along so everyone will
25 have a chance to testify.

1 And again, let me say that only one person
2 at a time can talk because this lady is an excellent
3 court reporter, she court reports for us all the time,
4 but she can only listen to one person at a time.

5 If somebody says like, as Commissioner
6 Drainer says, what you wanted to say, you can be sworn
7 in and state that you agree with that person or with
8 that position.

9 And again, I'm repeating some of this, but
10 it bears repeating, if you have specific questions
11 about service complaints, we have the people who are
12 in the know right here, and that's all these people
13 behind this table here, and they will be happy, more
14 than happy to help you if you've got any complaints or
15 questions. We often have questions at local public
16 hearings that only these people can answer, and they
17 will be happy to do that for you.

18 We really have a good attendance tonight,
19 and this is what makes us happy, when we see this many
20 people here. So if we could -- if you'd make your
21 comments brief and to the point, everyone will have a
22 chance to speak.

23 And after you finish your testimony, if you
24 would remain at the lectern, please, if any of these
25 people have questions of you. And as Commissioner

1 Drainer said, they won't cross-examine you like they
2 do on TV. This is not that. If they have a question
3 that they might want to clarify something or have you
4 explain something, they may ask you a question like
5 that.

6 But if you would stay there so that they
7 would have a chance to talk to you. Also,
8 Commissioner Drainer or Commissioner Simmons or I may
9 have some questions for you if we need some
10 explanation.

11 So when you come down here, we will ask you
12 to be sworn in. Then before you testify, if you will
13 state and spell your name for the court reporter. So
14 I'm going to call the first two names on the list, and
15 the first one is Mary Chirnside. Mary Chirnside. And
16 the second person who is on deck is Mr. John Hussey.
17 Is that a correct pronunciation?

18 (Witness sworn.)

19 JUDGE HOPKINS: Would you please state and
20 spell your name for the court reporter.

21 MS. CHIRNSIDE: Mary Chirnside,
22 C-h-i-r-n-s-i-d-e.

23 JUDGE HOPKINS: All right. Go ahead and
24 tell us your --

25 MS. CHIRNSIDE: I came here -- this is the

1 first meeting of this sort that I've attended. I came
2 as a learning experience. I had no idea I would be up
3 here, but since I'm here, I'll just state my feelings
4 and opinions or whatever and you can respond or not.

5 75 to 87.5 percent seems excessive. If
6 choices were made in the past that were not cost
7 effective or didn't work out, perhaps like the meters
8 that I've heard a rumor don't work, that's not my
9 fault. You know, I just think it's excessive, and
10 that's all I can say.

11 Thank you.

12 JUDGE HOPKINS: All right. Thank you.
13 Commissioner Drainer?

14 COMMISSIONER DRAINER: I have no questions,
15 but thank you for coming.

16 JUDGE HOPKINS: Commissioner Simmons?

17 COMMISSIONER SIMMONS: Thank you for coming.

18 JUDGE HOPKINS: Thank you. John Hussey, and
19 the next person after that will be Simone Parks. Yes,
20 ma'am. Would you come down here. Would you pull that
21 mic a little closer to you and speak into that, sir.

22 (Witness sworn.)

23 JUDGE HOPKINS: Please state and spell your
24 name for the court reporter.

25 MR. Hussey: John Hussey, H-u-s-s-e-y.

1 JUDGE HOPKINS: Go right ahead, sir.

2 MR. HUSSEY: Well, I agree with the previous
3 speaker that the rate increase proposed by UE sounds
4 pretty excessive. And also, she mentioned the case of
5 the remote readouts on the meters that, as I
6 understand it from people around town, these haven't
7 functioned in other parts of the UA (sic) system with
8 any accuracy and that the contractor that originally
9 was installing these has gone belly up, has been
10 purchased by another company, and that they were still
11 having problems getting this remote readout to be
12 accurate and function with any reliability.

13 And I guess one of the questions is to me,
14 are we as the customers picking up a lot of this
15 expense and maybe lost money of UE's on this system,
16 which when it works will be a great system. I also
17 know there can be a lot of money spent before that
18 happens.

19 And I guess that's about the only thing I've
20 got to say other than over the years I've been real
21 happy with UE's service.

22 JUDGE HOPKINS: All right. Well, thank you
23 sir. Any questions?

24 COMMISSIONER SIMMONS: No questions.

25 JUDGE HOPKINS: Mr. Byrne?

1 MR. BYRNE: I just -- sir, I'm sorry. I
2 just have one question. Have you had any -- have you
3 had any problems with your meter?

4 MR. HUSSEY: No.

5 MR. BYRNE: Okay.

6 MR. HUSSEY: But let me ask you a question.
7 Is Columbia on remote read now?

8 MR. BYRNE: Yes.

9 MR. HUSSEY: It is?

10 MR. BYRNE: Yes.

11 MR. HUSSEY: I wasn't aware of that. The
12 last I heard that it wasn't. So if it is, I guess I
13 can't complain.

14 JUDGE HOPKINS: Thank you, sir.

15 Now, Ms. Parks is next, and then after that
16 is N. Green. N. Green. Green? Green is not here?
17 All right. How about Albert Delmez? If you'll come
18 down here and be on deck. Thank you.

19 (Witness sworn.)

20 JUDGE HOPKINS: Thank you, ma'am. If you
21 want to pull that mic down and speak into that,
22 everyone will be able to hear you.

23 MS. PARKS: Well, I did accuse the company
24 of fraud due to the fact that in June my statement
25 here from the month of -- as I said, it was a minor

1 problem. However, everything counts and should be
2 right.

3 So my problem was, from June 13 to July 13 I
4 paid -- and I was home every day. I paid 24.89. Now,
5 in the -- I was gone away, and I brought my airline
6 ticket to prove that I was gone, and I only came back
7 for 12 days in my home, and so my bill was only 25
8 cents less from July 13 to August 13. So I was home
9 12 days and yet I paid, you know, as much
10 as -- as much as I did when I was 30 days at home.

11 So I could not understand it. And even
12 though the gentleman checked the price of gas 43.80
13 June and July and 54 from July to August, we still
14 don't understand what's the difference, you know.
15 When I called the company, they said, Well, it's the
16 pilot lights, and I just could not believe it. This
17 is a fraud.

18 COMMISSIONER DRAINER: Ma'am, what I'd like
19 to do is because when -- everyone needs to understand,
20 the Commissioners themselves can't answer questions.
21 We are here to hear your concerns. But what I'd like
22 to do on this, so that I know that we get the answers
23 for you and that we have it on the record, I'd
24 appreciate it if Mr. Meyer would get with you and the
25 service gentleman from AmerenUE, that you would look

1 at what her bill is.

2 And what I'll be asking you, Mr. Byrne, is,
3 at the end of the public hearing, any questions like
4 this, that you will have an explanation in the record
5 of what the billing discrepancies were so that not
6 only Mrs. Parks has an explanation but we have an
7 explanation on the record that all the Commissioners
8 can see. Okay. Do you mind doing that?

9 MS. PARKS: No, not all.

10 COMMISSIONER DRAINER: I appreciate that
11 very much. So Mr. Meyer will get with her. Thank
12 you.

13 JUDGE HOPKINS: Thank you. The next speaker
14 is Mr. Delmez, and after that Val Kenestron.

15 MR. DELMEZ: My name is Al Delmez,
16 D-e-l-m-e-z.

17 JUDGE HOPKINS: Just a moment, sir. Val --

18 MS. HINSHAW: Hinshaw.

19 JUDGE HOPKINS: I'm sorry. If you'd come
20 down here and get on deck, we'd appreciate it.

21 (Witness sworn.)

22 JUDGE HOPKINS: All right. Sir, go ahead.
23 Thank you.

24 MR. DELMEZ: This is in the form of a
25 question, which is perhaps not relevant to the case,

1 but I am wondering, as some do, whether or not the
2 merger of the two companies, Union Electric and the
3 Illinois company, had some influence on the rate
4 increase or proposed rate increase, whether or not
5 that was a negative or positive factor or a neutral
6 factor.

7 I think that is a consideration. I think we
8 here in Columbia feel that we should not subsidize the
9 residents of Illinois, but I think it is a factor, one
10 to be considered.

11 Only one other comment. I am both a
12 stockholder, shareholder and a customer of Ameren, and
13 I hope that consideration will be given to the
14 customer.

15 JUDGE HOPKINS: Thank you, sir. Now Val
16 Hinshaw next, and then Julie Casteel, if you would
17 come down here and be on deck.

18 (Witness sworn.)

19 JUDGE HOPKINS: Thank you. Please state and
20 spell your name for the court reporter.

21 MS. HINSHAW: My name is Val, V-a-l,
22 Hinshaw, H-i-n-s-h-a-w. I am here in support of the
23 statements that Mary Hussmann will make with ROWEL. I
24 am also concerned as a citizen of this county that
25 when I see that the food banks are running out of food

1 and people are working long hours to maintain a
2 family, I think this is not the time to raise the cost
3 of a very important utility. \$120 a year for working
4 families would be a great imposition and a hardship.

5 JUDGE HOPKINS: Thank you, ma'am. Any
6 questions, Commissioner Drainer?

7 COMMISSIONER DRAINER: Thank you.

8 JUDGE HOPKINS: Julie Casteel is next and
9 then David Mars. Is David Mars here?

10 MR. MARS: Yeah.

11 JUDGE HOPKINS: Yes, sir. Would you like to
12 come down and be on deck? All right. Ms. Casteel.

13 (Witness sworn.)

14 MS. Casteel: But I simply want to defer to
15 another individual, if I could. She can tell the
16 story much better than I can.

17 JUDGE HOPKINS: All right. We'll swear her
18 in, then.

19 MS. Hussmann: My name is Mary Hussmann.

20 (Witness sworn.)

21 JUDGE HOPKINS: Would you please state and
22 spell your name for the court reporter.

23 MS. HUSSMANN: My name is Mary Hussmann,
24 H-u-s-s-m-a-n-n. As you can see, there are other
25 people here that are with my organization and are in

1 support of the words that I'm going to be saying here.

2 There's a brochure for AmerenUE that they
3 put out, and this brochure says, Life just got a
4 little easier. That's on this flier here. But if
5 this request from them passes, the brochure will have
6 to be revised. It's going to have to state, Life just
7 got a little harder. And for many of our members,
8 life just would get a whole lot harder.

9 I work as an organizer for the nonprofit
10 organization called ROWEL, Reform Organization of
11 Welfare. We have 1,800 members throughout Missouri.
12 They're mainly low and fixed income families. Some of
13 those families are here tonight. It's hard enough for
14 folks to pay the bill under current conditions, but if
15 the PSC passes this unreasonably high increase, it
16 won't just be a minor inconvenience to our folks, but
17 it can result in a literal life or death issue.

18 As you can tell, ROWEL strongly opposes all
19 of this rate increase. None of this increase, as I
20 understand it, will be used to actually buy oil. It's
21 all non-oil. I called and tried to find out some of
22 this. I wish that someone would put out a rate
23 increase for dummies book because I know that some of
24 this gets very complicated.

25 But I'm going to try and make it simple to

1 you from our point of view. I inquired about the cost
2 to big business. I was told that they are not
3 included in this rate increase. In fact, they are
4 going to give big business up to a 6 percent decrease
5 in their rates if you give them the total amount.

6 It's especially unfair that this rate hike
7 is only being laid onto the residential customers of
8 AmerenUE. This sounds surprisingly like that old
9 trickle down voodoo economics that we have seen
10 before. Some years ago I saw a sign at a national
11 convention that said, We're tired of being trickled
12 on, and that's what I say tonight.

13 Before one dime of this increase is granted,
14 the Public Service Commission should remind itself of
15 its role to give representation to the public, and I
16 think especially to the public that is already
17 struggling each and every month to pay their utility
18 bills. Study the profits that are being made. Focus
19 on the real need, not what we suspect to be the greed
20 need. You should do this as if Missouri lives -- make
21 this decision as if Missouri lives depended on your
22 decision because, in fact, there are some that do.

23 Thank you very much.

24 JUDGE HOPKINS: Thank you.

25 David Mars, and next is Jackson, Archie

1 Jackson. Is Archie Jackson here? Okay. Mr. Jackson,
2 if you would be seated up here on deck.

3 (Witness sworn.)

4 JUDGE HOPKINS: Would you please state and
5 spell your name for the court reporter.

6 MR. MARS: David Mars, M-a-r-s, and I'm a
7 representative of Ashland citizens which may or may
8 not be able to come here tonight. I know a couple
9 dozen of the elderly senior citizens there who are
10 already on a very fixed income, a very tight budget,
11 this would unduly devastate their budget.

12 And the difficulty that I see is that
13 AmerenUE has a lot of the smaller communities that
14 they serve natural gas to, Centralia and what have
15 you. These have been towns where -- like, these
16 people have been in Ashland for all their lives
17 almost, and they live there because it's a pace of
18 life, it's a quality of life and it's a cost of life
19 they can afford.

20 These kind of increases move more to a
21 different scenario they aren't going to be able to
22 handle. Increases such as this, personally I would
23 like to see a little more delineation as to why they
24 do need. Of course, they're a private corporation.
25 That can be private information, but in terms of

1 explaining more thoroughly as to why they need these
2 increases and what the costs are accounted to.

3 Those are my comments. Thank you.

4 JUDGE HOPKINS: Thank you, sir.

5 Commissioner Drainer, any questions.

6 COMMISSIONER DRAINER: Mr. Mars, I do want
7 to let you know that, because we do regulate this
8 company, our staff, and other parties, but our staff
9 very thoroughly will go over every -- every item that
10 you're asking about on why they say they need the
11 money, and that will be a matter of public record. So
12 they will have to itemize where they're going to
13 request increases, and then staff will look at that
14 and they will make allowances or discount, you know,
15 what they think really doesn't need to be increased.

16 All that then will come to the Commissioners
17 in a formal hearing with witnesses. So it isn't kept
18 under blanket. It will be a matter of public record.
19 I just wanted to let you know that.

20 MR. MARS: Could I ask somebody a question
21 in the room?

22 COMMISSIONER DRAINER: Well, no. You really
23 can't ask anyone a question at this time. This is
24 just a time for you to make statements, but I did want
25 to clarify that for you. Thank you.

1 JUDGE HOPKINS: Mr. Jackson is next.
2 Laureen Emerson. Laureen Emerson? Is Laureen Emerson
3 not here? Is she here?
4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: She's in the hallway.
5 JUDGE HOPKINS: How about Pat Danner? Pat
6 Danner?
7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: They're here.
8 JUDGE HOPKINS: Ivan -- Ivan Nyling (sic),
9 would you like to come down here and be on deck, sir?
10 All right, sir. Thank you for your patience.
11 (Witness sworn.)
12 JUDGE HOPKINS: Thank you. Go ahead.
13 MR. JACKSON: My name is Archie,
14 A-r-c-h-i-e, Jackson, J-a-c-k-s-o-n.
15 I guess one of my concerns is that we've
16 heard several different figures. We've heard, I
17 think, a 14 percent rate increase. We've heard a
18 22 percent rate increase, not taking into account the
19 adjustment for whatever adjustments on natural gas.
20 Having moved here from Oklahoma, I understand that
21 production considerations and things like that do
22 affect it.
23 I guess one of my concerns is, by the time
24 you figure in the cost, the adjustment on the gas,
25 consumers are possibly looking at 25, 30 percent rate

1 increase, which will burden people like ROWEL and the
2 elderly and myself. I'm a disabled person. My wife
3 teaches school, so we're kind of on a fixed income, as
4 most people are around here.

5 I also understand that there's a need to
6 maintain companies for profitability, for
7 shareholders, for safety and things like this. I did
8 appreciate Mr. Byrne's clarification when I brought up
9 the issue of the \$56 million in possible overpayments
10 might be the electrical part of UE rather than the
11 gas. I appreciate that.

12 But one of the things I guess my concern is
13 that we have a figure of 2.8 on up to around 8 million
14 which was the Public Service's ballpark figure of a
15 reasonable rate increase. They're asking for what
16 was, I think, a 14, which was a \$12 million increase,
17 and now we hear 22 percent.

18 I guess my concern is, is this thing going
19 to keep going up and going up to the point -- and I
20 realize your work is to set a rate that's fair to the
21 company but to the consumers, but I also concur that I
22 think this is a cost that should be shared with the
23 company, not totally with the consumers.

24 JUDGE HOPKINS: All right. Thank you, sir.
25 Commissioner Drainer, any questions?

1 COMMISSIONER DRAINER: No.

2 JUDGE HOPKINS: Commissioner Simmons?

3 COMMISSIONER SIMMONS: No. Thank you. I

4 appreciate your comments.

5 JUDGE HOPKINS: Any questions from any

6 party? Thank you very much, sir. Ivan Nyling.

7 MR. NYBERG: Nyberg.

8 JUDGE HOPKINS: I'm sorry. Come on up here.

9 I skipped some names. Laureen Emerson, did she come

10 in? Pat Danner.

11 MS. DANNER: We signed that thinking it was

12 a registration. So we'd like to be excused. However,

13 we feel very strongly with Mary Hussmann and the whole

14 ROWEL group.

15 JUDGE HOPKINS: If you'd like to testify,

16 you can come up here and be sworn in and testify.

17 MS. DANNER: Well, I suppose I could.

18 JUDGE HOPKINS: Thank you. All right.

19 Russell Jones. Russell Jones? All right.

20 (Witness sworn.)

21 JUDGE HOPKINS: Would you please state and

22 spell your name for the court reporter.

23 MR. NYBERG: First name is Ivan, I-v-a-n,

24 last name Nyberg, N-y-b-e-r-g.

25 JUDGE HOPKINS: Go right ahead, sir.

1 MR. NYBERG: To keep from rambling too much,
2 I made myself a few notes. First, I did appreciate
3 the prehearing session. I got some information and
4 have a little bit better understanding of this total
5 gas rate. I understand that it's broken into
6 basically three parts, a customer charge, a commodity
7 charge, and then, of course, we have the variable rate
8 based on cost, which is a very unique feature. I wish
9 I had something like that.

10 The customer charge, the PSC has proposed
11 that it be increased to \$8.50 from a current \$8.
12 Based on the general cost of living, I feel that
13 that's probably about right, although I don't like to
14 see it, but I can agree with that.

15 The commodity charge, they are proposing an
16 increase of 34 percent. I don't quite agree with that
17 either. That 34 percent increase seems excessive.

18 I have the distinct feeling that UE has
19 intentionally asked for more than they really need in
20 the hope that they'll get about half, and then they'll
21 be happy. It's sort of like the price of gasoline.
22 Do you remember when it was \$1.29, and then it went to
23 \$1.69? Everybody screamed. I mean, we all screamed.
24 But then it eventually went down to \$1.39 and
25 everybody was happy. What happened? It was still 10

1 cents more than it was, but we were happy. And have
2 you noticed today it went up again?

3 JUDGE HOPKINS: Thank you. Any questions,
4 Commissioner Drainer?

5 COMMISSIONER DRAINER: No.

6 JUDGE HOPKINS: Questions, Commissioner
7 Simmons?

8 COMMISSIONER SIMMONS: Yeah, I do have one
9 question. I guess the prehearing this evening, was
10 that helpful to you? I think I heard you say that you
11 were able to obtain additional information. Was that
12 helpful to you at all?

13 MR. NYBERG: It was.

14 COMMISSIONER SIMMONS: And if so, would you
15 recommend that that's the kind of information --

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We can't hear you.

17 COMMISSIONER SIMMONS: The question was
18 whether or not the hearing, the prehearing this
19 evening was helpful information, and my question would
20 have been, do you believe that that's the kind of
21 information that would be helpful to consumers if we
22 did that before we had hearings?

23 MR. NYBERG: Yes. I did not understand the
24 rate structure at all, and based upon some information
25 that we were given and the explanation, I have a much

1 better understanding of the rate.

2 COMMISSIONER SIMMONS: Thank you, sir.

3 Appreciate your testimony.

4 COMMISSIONER DRAINER: I'm going to
5 backtrack one second. I won't take long because we
6 have a number of people that want to make statements
7 tonight. But Mr. David Mars did ask if he could ask
8 somewhere a question and I said no, we couldn't do it
9 here, and then I feel bad because I want everybody to
10 get their questions answered.

11 So what I'd like to do is ask Mr. Meyer
12 if -- would you go over and at least off the record
13 answer his question, because I really feel we have
14 staff available here that were here for the meeting
15 before this public hearing, and for those that would
16 still have questions, we do have staff that would be
17 more than happy to answer your questions.

18 So Mr. Meyer, if you wouldn't mind going on
19 up and meeting with him, I would feel better because I
20 would know his question was answered. Thank you.

21 JUDGE HOPKINS: Russell Jones is next. And
22 on deck would be Mr. Barker. Is there a Barker here?

23 MR. BURKS: Burks.

24 JUDGE HOPKINS: Burks. I'm sorry, sir.
25 Okay. You're on deck. You're great right there.

1 (Witness sworn.)

2 JUDGE HOPKINS: Thank you, sir. Go right
3 ahead.

4 MR. JONES: Russell Jones. It's J-o-n-e-s.
5 I want to speak in support of the persons who spoke
6 for the ROWEL. What I want to say for myself is, I'm
7 one of probably the newest customers of Union Electric
8 here, having moved to Columbia only in May.

9 I'm sure that my realtor was behind times
10 when she gave me a sheet where to go, and I went to
11 sign up for gas service at a building that no longer
12 had an occupancy or a sign on it. The boys in the
13 business next door, who I happened to know, directed
14 me to a place down in an industrial area, and there I
15 was told that I had to call someone.

16 I'm a person who relates best with people,
17 not electronic things, and I think it's a shame
18 that -- it's a shame that there's not some people from
19 the company that we can relate to here in Columbia
20 when we have some kind of a problem.

21 Thank you.

22 JUDGE HOPKINS: Thank you. Any questions?

23 COMMISSIONER SIMMONS: No questions. Thank
24 you, sir.

25 JUDGE HOPKINS: Thank you very much, sir.

1 Mr. Burks, you're up next, and Virgil Peterson, is
2 Virgil Peterson here? Would you come down and be on
3 deck, sir?

4 (Witness sworn.)

5 JUDGE HOPKINS: Please state and spell your
6 name for the court reporter and then tell us what
7 you'd like to tell us.

8 MR. Burks: Hansel, H-a-n-s-e-l, B-u-r-k-s.
9 My problem is my woman, my wife, I'm thinking if I
10 would keel over tomorrow she'll get more Social
11 Security money, see, and if I did keel over she'd get
12 more Social Security money so she could afford this
13 increase, maybe.

14 You know, 34 percent, 14 percent, she hasn't
15 got that in the last four years in Social Security
16 cost increases. The last time, I think last year she
17 got \$4 more per month based on her \$411 a month income
18 from Social Security, and that's on me. See, that's
19 my main concern. I want to speak for the retired
20 people, Social Security.

21 Thank you.

22 JUDGE HOPKINS: Any questions, Commissioner
23 Drainer?

24 COMMISSIONER DRAINER: I have no questions,
25 other than I was watching your wife and she looks

1 awfully proud to have you up here tonight.

2 JUDGE HOPKINS: Thank you. Okay.

3 Mr. Peterson's here and then Robert Reckman. Am I
4 pronouncing that, Robert Reckman? Is there a Robert
5 Reckman here? S.E. Reckman?

6 Okay. How about Lawrence Garvin? Lawrence
7 Garvin? Sir, would you come down here and be on deck.

8 (Witness sworn.)

9 JUDGE HOPKINS: Would you please --

10 MR. PETERSON: My name is Virgil Peterson,
11 V-i-r-g-i-l P-e-t-e-r-s-o-n, and I live here in
12 Columbia, and I'm strictly against the increase in gas
13 prices because of the fact that a great number of us
14 are retired and we're on a limited income, and I mean
15 limited.

16 And not only that, I served during World
17 War II all through the Pacific theater of operation,
18 and I think that the veterans of this country are
19 getting a raw deal, and our taxes are going up.
20 There's just nothing really that we can do. And the
21 price on gas is just about like the famous saying that
22 was stated the other day. If you've got a sick dog,
23 you take it to the veterinary or the taxidermist.
24 Either way you get your dog back.

25 Thank you.

1 JUDGE HOPKINS: Thank you, sir. Any
2 questions, Commissioner Drainer?

3 COMMISSIONER DRAINER: No.

4 JUDGE HOPKINS: Thank you. All right.
5 Mr. Garvin, and next after Mr. Garvin is Tom Murphy.
6 Tom Murphy here?

7 (Witness sworn.)

8 MR. GARVIN: My name is Lawrence Garvin;
9 Lawrence, L-a-w-r-e-n-c-e, Garvin, G-a-r-v-i-n. And I
10 somewhat understand AmerenUE's need to increase
11 revenues. However, it seems to me that a 14 percent
12 increase in revenues is excessive, and nothing that I
13 received -- I did get on the -- respond to the mailing
14 that was sent out and was given an e-mail address to
15 contact, but that did not answer any questions
16 specifically.

17 I'd also like to comment about the lack of
18 service of AmerenUE. Our gas was cut off for some
19 reason while we were out of town, and when I called --
20 I tried to relight it myself only to find out that the
21 gas meter was locked out, which I guess makes sense,
22 but it took me 20 minutes of hold time on the
23 telephone before I got to speak to a customer service
24 representative. That I hate.

25 However, as a compliment to AmerenUE

1 relative to that particular outage, within 30 minutes
2 somebody showed up at the door to light my water
3 heater. So that I appreciate, but I don't like being
4 put on hold for an inordinate long period of time.

5 Concerning this meeting tonight, I see we
6 have a good turnout. I think the turnout would have
7 probably been even greater had it been held in a place
8 where there was convenient parking. I think I'm
9 illegally parked across the street and I hope to heck
10 I don't have a ticket.

11 There's some questions that I had concerning
12 the rate increase. I understand that all utilities
13 are buying natural gas. I do not understand why the
14 price of natural gas is tied to the price of crude oil
15 in Saudi Arabia, but that seems to be the way it's
16 working.

17 Also, AmerenUE, as other utilities, must
18 have some long-term contracts with the suppliers, and
19 those rates are probably significantly less than the
20 current rate, which I understand as of last week was
21 something like \$4.54 per thousand cubic feet. And so
22 my interest would be in knowing what long-term
23 contracts exist, what the rates that AmerenUE has
24 under those contracts, and how that is factored into
25 their current rate increase.

1 Secondly, assuming that AmerenUE's
2 projection about costs are not met and that they might
3 actually be less than what they're projecting with
4 this rate increase, are there any provisions to reduce
5 the rates to the customers? All we see is rate
6 increases, but I wonder if there's any provisions for
7 reducing the cost if they do not meet the projected
8 rate increase.

9 And that's all I have. Thank you very much.

10 JUDGE HOPKINS: Thank you. The person after
11 Mr. Murphy looks like one of my handwriting students
12 because I can't read this, but they live on Fairview.
13 Anybody live on Fairview?

14 MS. ELLIOTT: Yes, I do. Luann Elliott.

15 JUDGE HOPKINS: Would you like to come down
16 here and be on deck?

17 (Witness sworn.)

18 MR. MURPHY: Tom Murphy, T-o-m, last name
19 M-u-r-p-h-y. Very short. I'm opposed -- I hope the
20 Commission would evaluate the rate increase as it
21 relates to the residential and other services. Off
22 the record -- or on the record, it doesn't quite seem
23 fair, and perhaps you can go into detail and when you
24 have your final decision make it so people like me can
25 understand it.

1 Thank you.

2 JUDGE HOPKINS: All right. Thank you. Any

3 questions?

4 COMMISSIONER DRAINER: No. Thank you very

5 much.

6 JUDGE HOPKINS: Any questions, Commissioner

7 Simmons?

8 COMMISSIONER SIMMONS: No.

9 JUDGE HOPKINS: Thank you. And ma'am,

10 you're next, and then after her is Peggy Ellis.

11 MS. ELLIOTT: Elliott.

12 JUDGE HOPKINS: Pardon me?

13 MS. ELLIOTT: Peggy Elliott.

14 JUDGE HOPKINS: Come on down here, ma'am,

15 please.

16 (Witness sworn.)

17 JUDGE HOPKINS: Please state and spell your

18 name for the court reporter.

19 MS. ELLIOTT: Luann, L-u-a-n-n, Elliott,

20 E-l-l-i-o-t-t.

21 JUDGE HOPKINS: Thank you. Go right ahead.

22 MS. ELLIOTT: I won't take long. I have a

23 speech impediment, so it could take all night. I am

24 on a fixed income. I have raised five children on my

25 own, and this raise in this gas is going to make it

1 worse. When you are taking care of them on your own,
2 you have to balance your bills, and if you raise this,
3 it's going to unbalance everything.

4 I wish the people could be put in our shoes
5 and see how it feels, and I don't know what else to
6 say, but I agree with Mary Hussmann, with Mr. Jones.
7 We just cannot do this. There are other ways to put
8 the money to, like the homeless and other places also.

9 Thank you.

10 JUDGE HOPKINS: Thank you very much. Peggy
11 Elliott, and then after her will be Evelyn Butler.
12 Evelyn Butler? Is Evelyn here?

13 (Witness sworn.)

14 MS. ELLIOTT: My name is Peggy Elliott,
15 P-e-g-g-y, E-l-l-i-o-t-t.

16 I have lived here in Columbia for quite a
17 while, and I noticed that the proposal of the increase
18 of 75 percent, I think that is quite too much. I
19 realize during the summertime, I think it would be
20 better if, instead of getting a small bill during the
21 summertime, that it increased a little bit and that
22 would help during the fall for your bill that you get
23 in the fall.

24 Now, that's -- my husband and I are both
25 retired, and we are on a fixed income, and so that's

1 why I hope they do not increase it to 75 percent, but
2 we'd settle for 50 percent if that was possible.
3 That's all I have to say.

4 JUDGE HOPKINS: Thank you very much. Any
5 questions, Commissioner Drainer?

6 COMMISSIONER DRAINER: Excuse me. I wish to
7 thank Ms. Elliott for speaking, but everyone who comes
8 up I would appreciate if we'd give them the courtesy
9 of letting them speak and not -- let's not boo anyone
10 down and cut them off from speaking.

11 This is a formal hearing in which we want to
12 let everyone be able to give us their opinion, and I
13 greatly appreciate that we give Ms. Elliott and all
14 the people that come up here our respect. Thank you.
15 And thank you for coming up and speaking.

16 MS. ELLIOTT: Thank you very much.

17 JUDGE HOPKINS: Ms. Butler, Evelyn Butler,
18 and on deck will be Ivan Eames. Am I pronouncing that
19 correct?

20 MR. EAMES: I'm right here.

21 (Witness sworn.)

22 JUDGE HOPKINS: Thank you, ma'am. Please
23 state and spell your name.

24 MS. BUTLER: Evelyn, E-v-e-l-y-n, Butler,
25 B-u-t-l-e-r. And my home address is 3308 Greenridge

1 Road, Columbia, Missouri 65202. And the reason I'm
2 here is on behalf of the senior citizens and also for
3 those that are in retirement.

4 My husband and I both are retired. We draw
5 retirement funds, and we're also retired social -- we
6 also receive Social Security funds, which is not much
7 compared to what you do when you're working. But our
8 bill runs -- now, this is summertime, \$93 a month.
9 During the regular winter months, they run between 200
10 and \$300 a month, and it is unable for us to make
11 these payments, because we are on a corner lot.

12 And when we had a gas company, we used to
13 call for them to come out and to start the gas, and
14 they refused to do that because it's in a basement.
15 Well, it's not a basement. It's under the house.
16 That's how it was made. And they refused to come out
17 and set the furnace, you know, for us to have heat.
18 So my husband had to do it.

19 But all due respect to our gas company,
20 which we don't no longer have, we do need to lower
21 these prices for our retirement people and Social
22 Security people.

23 Thank you.

24 JUDGE HOPKINS: Thank you, ma'am. All
25 right. After Mr. Eames will be Henry G. Lane. Is

1 Mr. Lane here? Thank you.

2 (Witness sworn.)

3 JUDGE HOPKINS: Thank you. Would you please
4 state and spell your name for the court reporter.

5 MR. EAMES: My name is Ivan, I-v-a-n, L-e-e,
6 last name is E-a-m-e-s. And I'm testifying today on
7 behalf of Central Missouri Counties Human Development
8 Corporation, which is the community action agency that
9 serves eight counties in Mid-Missouri.

10 For over the last ten years I have
11 administered the Energy Crisis Intervention program.
12 The purpose of this program is to prevent low-income
13 energy consumers from disconnection in utility service
14 by providing assistance to energy vendors on behalf of
15 eligible people. It should be noted that over the
16 last five years 70 percent of the people we serve have
17 incomes of \$8,000 a year or less.

18 First, it is my understanding that AmerenUE
19 is requesting that the minimum charge, the customer
20 charge be increased from 8 to \$15. In documents filed
21 with the Commission the Office of Public Counsel has
22 performed a cost service study that suggests that the
23 customer charge should remain much closer to the
24 current \$8 amount. We strongly support that
25 conclusion. It is especially burdensome to low-income

1 consumers to increase this basic charge that has
2 nothing to do with the actual natural gas consumption.

3 A home energy burden is the home energy bill
4 as a percentage of income. This approach has now been
5 incorporated into federal statute creating a
6 Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program. That
7 statute mandates that those benefits be targeted to
8 households who have the lowest incomes and the highest
9 bills in relation to income taking into account
10 household size.

11 In their study, *On the Brink of Disaster*, a
12 State by State Analysis of Natural Gas Winter Home
13 Heating Bills, published in 1995 by Roger Coltan, they
14 provide the average winter natural gas heating burdens
15 for various low income populations. They document
16 that the average winter income of LIHEAP recipients
17 was \$1,537. The average winter gas bill is 210.94.
18 And the bill as a percent of income is 13.7 percent of
19 that household's income.

20 For TANF recipients, their average winter
21 income is \$826. Their average winter gas bill is
22 210.94, and the bill as a percent of income is 24.1
23 percent for Missouri consumers.

24 Now, it might be argued by some that with
25 the lowest unemployment rate in 30 years and the

1 presumed success of welfare reform, people are better
2 off and can afford a higher energy burden. However,
3 the issue is poverty and low wages. A recent study by
4 the Missouri Department of Social Services of families
5 that left welfare rolls showed that 58 percent of them
6 remained in poverty.

7 Moreover, the current prosperity has not
8 been shared with the low income wage earners. The
9 Center on Budget and Policy Priority shows that
10 between 1977 and 1999 the top 20 percent of households
11 increased their annual income after taxes by
12 43 percent and the bottom fifth lost 9 percent in
13 after tax income.

14 It is in this context that we urge the
15 Commission to evaluate the impact of AmerenUE's
16 request for a residential increase in natural gas of
17 22.1 percent to residential customers and to deny that
18 request.

19 According to the recent forecast by the
20 Energy Information Administration, and I quote, We are
21 projecting that natural gas prices at the wellhead
22 will increase by about 55 percent this winter, October
23 through March, compared with last winter. Low income
24 consumers will be burdened by these new costs because
25 they will be automatically passed on, and they

1 certainly do not need the additional burden of another
2 permanent increase in natural gas bills.

3 Finally, there's another issue I'd like to
4 raise because I think both the utility companies in
5 this state and the Commission itself have not
6 addressed the problems of low income consumers. On
7 September 11th, 1997, I attended the Natural Gas Round
8 Table Discussion Group entitled Managing Consumer
9 Energy Payments and Assistance in a Time of Change,
10 sponsored by the Public Service Commission.

11 Dr. Wayne Williams, Director of the Bureau
12 of Consumer Services of the Pennsylvania Public
13 Utility Commission gave a presentation entitled
14 Innovative Consumer Usage Reduction and Payment
15 Programs. He recommended we consider, I quote, a
16 business approach with two objectives, minimize
17 long-term costs for serving negative ability to pay
18 and maximize realistic customer payments.

19 It is important to note that targeted
20 utility rate funded weatherization with arrearage
21 forgiveness for low income consumers who maintain a
22 percent of income payment plan started as a pilot
23 project in Pennsylvania. It was the utility companies
24 that requested the adoption and implementation of a
25 statewide program.

1 Moreover, Dr. Williams argued that this
2 program was cost effective by reducing finance charges
3 to carry arrearages, the cost of collection activity
4 and uncollectibles, i.e. bad debt writeoffs that the
5 utilities are allowed to do and charge the rest of
6 ratepayers for them.

7 I bring this to the attention of the
8 Commission because of a chronic problem low income
9 consumers have with AmerenUE and other utilities that
10 have cold weather rule or budget payment plans. We
11 have seen people placed on a 12-month payment plan as
12 high as \$180 a month for natural gas only, and they
13 have an income of 292 a month.

14 People sign these agreements to remain
15 connected at the time, usually at the beginning of the
16 winter. Needless to say, this does not encourage
17 people to be responsible for paying their energy
18 bills.

19 Therefore, we implore the Missouri Public
20 Service Commission to either adopt an arrearage
21 forgiveness program connected to a percent of income
22 payment plan for low income consumers in this rate
23 case or, preferably, as a statewide program with all
24 of Missouri's utilities.

25 This is not only cost effective, but it

1 allows payments for low income consumers that is
2 reasonable related to their income which encourages
3 people to be responsible for their energy bills.

4 Thank you.

5 JUDGE HOPKINS: Thank you. Sir, do you have
6 a copy of that?

7 MR. EAMES: I do have it in writing. I put
8 it in writing because I wanted to share it with the
9 utility company attorneys.

10 JUDGE HOPKINS: Thank you. I'm going to
11 take that and put that into the record. Thank you.
12 Any questions, Commissioner Drainer?

13 COMMISSIONER DRAINER: No.

14 JUDGE HOPKINS: Commissioner Simmons?

15 COMMISSIONER SIMMONS: No questions. Thank
16 you, sir.

17 JUDGE HOPKINS: All right. Thank you. Now,
18 Mr. Lane is next and then Gene Laemmli. All right.
19 Mr. Lane.

20 (Witness sworn.)

21 JUDGE HOPKINS: State your name and spell it
22 for the court reporter, please.

23 MR. LANE: Henry, H-e-n-r-y, Lane, L-a-n-e.

24 I think we have a situation here where the
25 Union Electric/Ameren is asking for an excessive rate.

1 I think right now our rates are too high as they are,
2 and it's just going to make the situation worse. If
3 you'll look back in 1998 when UE/Ameren was formed,
4 the customer charge at that time, the base charge was
5 \$6.10. It's now \$8. That was a 33 percent increase.

6 Now we're going to add another 50 cents.
7 That's another 6 percent. We're talking about a
8 22 percent increase in the monthly charge over a
9 two-year period. That's ridiculous. It just doesn't
10 jive with the cost of living and other cost factors.

11 Also, on the delivery charge, back in 1998
12 when the merger took place, the delivery charge was
13 10.1098 cents. It is now 17.56 cents. That's an
14 increase of 70 percent over the last two years. This
15 is just too much. You're just asking too much for the
16 people.

17 And also, as far as the cost of the
18 commodity, I understand there are firms that can
19 provide gas, the actual product that we're talking
20 about here, at a lower cost. I know back in 1988, and
21 this is a long time ago, the County Commission here in
22 Columbia found out that they could get from a firm
23 called Tilex Corporation their gas for about
24 16 percent less than the cost that it was running
25 through UE.

1 We need to look at the rate factors. The
2 rates are just too high for all three elements that
3 are going into the rate. This is just -- to have this
4 rate increase now is absolutely ridiculous. The
5 people can't afford it.

6 I would -- I just can't help but think, as
7 the gentleman talked about earlier, that UE is just
8 hoping that they can get something out of this, but I
9 wouldn't be surprised to see UE be coming back year
10 after year asking for a large amount, hoping for a
11 small amount, and eventually they'll get the
12 \$12 million that they're talking about.

13 I thank you very much.

14 JUDGE HOPKINS: Okay. Now, Alice Edwards
15 will be on deck. Alice Edwards here? Alice Edwards?
16 Okay. Next name down is Faye Pugh. Faye, if you
17 would come down here and be on deck. Sir, you're
18 next. You're next.

19 MR. LAEMMLI: My name is Gene LaemmlI.
20 That's L-a-e-m-m-l-i.

21 (Witness sworn.)

22 JUDGE HOPKINS: Thank you. Go right ahead.

23 MR. LAEMMLI: I guess my biggest problem
24 among all the others here tonight is the method in
25 which you go about approving or disapproving. It

1 almost reminds me of a deal at a used car lot of not
2 too reputable a character where you might come in and
3 find a car you think you like and I say, How much is
4 that car, and he says, It's \$2,000. Well, you bargain
5 and bargain and bargain and finally you say, Well,
6 what would you take for the car, and you say, Well,
7 995.

8 And that's about the kind of thing that
9 we're talking about here, and I really think that's
10 below the level of any good government to engage in
11 that kind of a hassle, trial balloons as you might
12 call them, just to see how much money they can really
13 get without being protested vigorously by the public.

14 And I support the people who are here on
15 fixed income, which I'm somewhat on. But I just can't
16 see the method which you go about this and which the
17 company engages in you bargaining as to how much money
18 you'll let them have.

19 Thank you very much.

20 JUDGE HOPKINS: All right. Thank you, sir,
21 for testifying. Ms. Pugh is next, and Dennis Mueller.
22 Dennis Mueller. Come on down here and be on deck.

23 (Witness sworn.)

24 JUDGE HOPKINS: Please state and spell your
25 name for the court reporter.

1 MS. PUGH: My name is Faye, F-a-y-e, Pugh,
2 P-u-g-h.

3 Looking at your rate increases, I have a
4 hard time looking at the justification, especially on
5 the residential customer charge, of how you can
6 justify incomes in this area or for that matter
7 anywhere in the state of Missouri has risen the same
8 proportion you wish to raise the proposed customer
9 service charge.

10 My other concern is, you'd be hard pressed
11 to find incomes rising the price that you want to
12 raise the commodity charge, the 34 percent.

13 Due to the circumstances in our home, we
14 have a house in south Missouri due to my husband's
15 employment. We had the option there, because we're on
16 LP gas, of prepaying our gas at a 13 percent reduction
17 in cost by prepaying. Granted, there are people on
18 fixed incomes, retired individuals, that would not
19 have that option or the flexibility to do so, but the
20 option is there. Nowhere do you see this option.

21 I have a hard time justifying it based upon
22 the lack of service that AmerenUE has provided since
23 their merger. As was pointed out, there's no place to
24 go to. There's no one to talk to. I've got a
25 question since I've went on remote meter readings, and

1 I haven't documented it, as to whether the meter
2 readings are accurate, and I am going to make a point
3 of documenting it.

4 Other than that, how do you justify raising
5 your customer charges? What are you giving the
6 customers? There again, your commodity charge of
7 34 percent increase, you have a hard time, as Mr. Lane
8 pointed out, justifying your current charge.

9 Another thing, many of these individuals
10 sitting in this room are facing the same thing my
11 family's facing. We're on Missouri Consolidated
12 Health Care insurance. We got notification that come
13 January 1st rates go up 90 percent. How does your
14 family pay health insurance and then a gas increase,
15 too?

16 Many of these individuals here are on high
17 medication costs that are not even covered by
18 Medicare. Do they choose between their health and
19 being able to stay warm?

20 Thank you.

21 JUDGE HOPKINS: All right. Thank you,
22 ma'am. After Mr. Mueller is Brock Jones.

23 (Witness sworn.)

24 JUDGE HOPKINS: Thank you. Please state and
25 spell your name for the court reporter.

1 MR. MUELLER: My name is Dennis Mueller,
2 D-e-n-n-i-s M-u-e-l-l-e-r.

3 I've lived in Columbia about 24 years except
4 for a time back in '98 when I lived in a -- north of
5 Moberly, and I was living with my girlfriend up there,
6 and we had problems with AmerenUE. It wasn't with the
7 gas, but it was with the electric. Something messed
8 up with their meter and it didn't read it all winter.

9 So then they came up with this \$300 bill
10 that they wanted us to pay, and, I mean, we had a
11 fight with them, and they ended up finally giving us
12 \$100 off our bill. And to me, that still wasn't
13 enough because we hadn't even used the blower on our
14 stove that whole winter because it made too much
15 noise. We just had a real bad fight with them.

16 And I just don't trust AmerenUE to do what
17 they say they're going to do. And this is a college
18 town, and for the most part, nine months out of the
19 year, okay, you've got college students. The rest of
20 the time it's kind of vacant to the people that live
21 here, and they're trying to push costs of university
22 on the people of Columbia that stay here all year, I
23 don't see that that's fair either.

24 I just -- my other point is, I'd like to
25 know how you go about deciding this. I think it

1 should be a vote of the people of Columbia. I think
2 they should have some say in how this is decided.

3 That's all I have.

4 JUDGE HOPKINS: All right. Thank you for
5 your testimony. Any questions, Commissioner Drainer?

6 COMMISSIONER DRAINER: Thank you.

7 JUDGE HOPKINS: Commissioner Simmons?

8 COMMISSIONER SIMMONS: Thank you, sir.

9 JUDGE HOPKINS: Thank you, sir. Beverly
10 Meyer is after Mr. Jones. Is Beverly Meyer here?
11 Beverly Meyer? Are you Beverly Meyer?

12 MS. MEYER: I am.

13 (Witness sworn.)

14 JUDGE HOPKINS: Please state and spell your
15 name for the court reporter.

16 MR. JONES: I'm Brock Jones, B-r-o-c-k,
17 Jones.

18 Believe it or not, you're looking at
19 Mr. Average. I was born in 1957. I'm 43 years old,
20 at the height of the baby boomer period. I make an
21 average university salary. I have an average sized
22 house, average cost house. I have two cars, two cats.
23 We have three kids in the house.

24 Two years ago the University gave a \$400
25 across the board raise to everyone, but this year it's

1 about a 4 percent average. We're also going to see an
2 increase in our taxes due to the rec center and
3 potentially of the Stephens Park and other park
4 issuance tax going into Columbia.

5 I'm average. I'm pretty lucky. And I've
6 got to tell you, I'm violently opposed to this rate
7 increase. And I can't imagine how livid those who are
8 not as fortunate as I am are about this or will be
9 when they find out about it.

10 I've only got one other thing to say. This
11 is the only utility bill that I get, the only bill I
12 get of any kind that comes without an envelope.

13 JUDGE HOPKINS: Okay. After Beverly Meyer
14 is Carol Keely. Carol Keely?

15 MS. KEELY: I'm sorry. I just thought that
16 was a roll. I didn't want to say anything.

17 JUDGE HOPKINS: All right. And Vernon
18 Forbes. Vernon Forbes? Are you Mr. Forbes?

19 MR. FORBES: Yes.

20 JUDGE HOPKINS: All right. Thank you very
21 much.

22 (Witness sworn.)

23 MS. MEYER: My name is Beverly Meyer,
24 M-e-y-e-r. I live at 1506 St. Andrew. I've been in
25 Columbia 24 years.

1 I don't think the Commission understands
2 poverty. I've worked at a poverty school, over
3 50 percent of our children on very high rate of
4 reduced lunches. I don't think people understand how
5 many families are living together just to keep their
6 lights on. I don't think you realize -- and I wish I
7 had brought -- I just took a two-day course in
8 poverty. I don't think you realize the cost of
9 living, of basic living without buying anything.

10 And I really -- I don't know why I'm here
11 except I was angry. First of all, I could not find
12 this place. I got on the phone today. I called
13 Stephens College. They did not know where this was.
14 I am a map reader. I am an excellent map reader. I
15 got out the map of the GTE phone book. I could not
16 find this place very well. I asked -- I did get to a
17 second person, but they did not tell me exactly where
18 this was.

19 I think, No. 1, you need to put on your
20 letterheads or when you send letters out, you should
21 show the map location. This is a very unusual
22 location, and this is a very difficult place to find.
23 Not only for that, maybe people with disabilities to
24 get into this building. I think this should have been
25 a place that was easy to find, good parking. And I

1 knew directions. Many people coming into this place
2 would never have been able to find this place, and I
3 think that's important.

4 I have -- before the AmerenUE went into, I
5 did have -- I've had good relationships with
6 AmericanUE (sic) because I've had some problems. I
7 have an all gas house. I had an old gas stove. And
8 so I've had to use AmericanUE (sic).

9 When they changed and gone out of Columbia,
10 I found then when my gas went out that I had the fire
11 trucks come to my house. I do not believe that's part
12 of their responsibilities. I think if you're paying
13 for an issue, then you should get it. You cannot find
14 the location, getting on to a 1-800 number and even
15 being elderly, if an elderly person would try to get
16 into these 1-800 numbers they would go nuts. They
17 can't push in the buttons fast enough to get the
18 information.

19 And I think you need to make it easy for
20 people. You know, if you're going to have a
21 situation, then you better make it easy. You better
22 slow down the punch numbers if they're going to use a
23 punch number. I find many places -- in fact, I play
24 games with different companies. I do not push in
25 numbers. I wait and pretend like I'm a dial customer

1 because I know I want a person. I want a real person
2 on the other end of the line.

3 I do not want to know that we are your great
4 customer, but we want to know who am I talking to and
5 what about. So many times -- I mean, I have a dial
6 phone in my house and I have a -- I also have a push
7 button, but because even I can't get fast enough to
8 get that information in.

9 I think those are things you need to
10 consider. I think you need to consider the cost of
11 living. I pay over 55 percent of my salary just to
12 basic living. I do not live high. I have an old car.
13 I have lived in Columbia in the same house for 24
14 years.

15 I am on a -- I take a balanced budget to pay
16 your bills. I like to pay on time. Lots of times I
17 wait 'til the last minute to pay your bills. By the
18 time I get it across town and they charge me, because
19 I used to be able to drive it up to the window on the
20 last day and pay it. I can't do that anymore.

21 I think you just really have to look at
22 who's in this company and who's in the city and who's
23 in Missouri, and you have to look at the poverty rate,
24 and you must clearly look to see and think about the
25 families, whether they're low income families.

1 People are struggling to pay bills, you
2 know. If you make it too high for people, they're not
3 going to pay at all. You're going to be turning off
4 people's, you know, electricity -- your gas and then
5 you're going to have trouble getting it back on.

6 You know, I don't -- you know, that's -- I
7 don't know what to say, except I think of the story of
8 a frog, and he's put in boiling water and it's kind of
9 like a simmer. You know, the frog's in there and he's
10 kind of floating around and he's okay. All of a
11 sudden they turn up that heat and the frog is dead.

12 And that's what you're going to do to
13 customers. You're going to do that to citizens, and
14 that's why I'm here tonight, because I think you need
15 carefully, carefully to consider people, carefully
16 think about your profits, and think about who you're
17 working with.

18 This is not a state of high income, and I
19 think you need to clearly look at that and look at the
20 poverty rate in the state of Missouri before you make
21 any changes.

22 JUDGE HOPKINS: All right. Thank you very
23 much. Vernon Forbes is next, and then Glenn Hoffman.
24 Is Glenn Hoffman here?

25 (Witness sworn.)

1 JUDGE HOPKINS: Thank you. Please state and
2 spell your name for the court reporter.

3 MR. FORBES: My name is Vernon Forbes,
4 V-e-r-n-o-n, F-o-r-b-e-s.

5 My wife is the president of the Ridgeway
6 Neighborhood Association. The neighborhood is
7 extremely poor. It's been described by the city
8 planner as a blighted neighborhood. I'm here on
9 behalf of the Ridgeway Neighborhood Association. I
10 urge you, I urge you to deny this request.

11 This morning's newspaper, the Missourian,
12 reported a 30 point increase -- percent increase in
13 profits for AmerenUE with a residential increase of 14
14 percent that I read from this handout as I walked in.

15 AmerenUE, as I understand it, is a
16 for-profit company that pays benefits to stockholders.
17 If they're asking a 14 percent increase when profits
18 are at 31 percent increase, what will they ask when
19 the profits go down? The increase I understand is
20 serving stockholders and not customers, and I would --
21 I would submit to you, the Commission, that in
22 granting this request you are subsidizing
23 inefficiency.

24 That's my only testimony.

25 JUDGE HOPKINS: Thank you very much. We

1 appreciate that. Any questions, Commissioner Drainer?

2 COMMISSIONER DRAINER: Thank you very much
3 for coming.

4 JUDGE HOPKINS: Commissioner Simmons?

5 COMMISSIONER SIMMONS: I appreciate it.

6 JUDGE HOPKINS: Thank you very much.

7 After Mr. Hoffman will be Karen Enyard. Is
8 Karen Enyard here? Thank you, ma'am. Come down and
9 be on deck.

10 (Witness sworn.)

11 JUDGE HOPKINS: Thank you. Please state and
12 spell your name for the court reporter.

13 MR. HOFFMAN: My name is Glenn, G-l-e-n-n,
14 Hoffman, H-o-f-f-m-a-n. I reside at 7181 Wagon Trail
15 Road, which is north area, actually outside the city
16 limits.

17 I have to admit that I know Beverly Meyer,
18 and I'm sorry, but I promise not to get quite that
19 emotional. I've been a user at this address of
20 natural gas for 35 years, and I can remember when I
21 had an old machine and put in a hunk of extra pipe,
22 and this being before county planning and zoning, to
23 get some gas up to my house because I'd worked getting
24 a petition together with some people out there to try
25 to get gas brought up my road.

1 I'm here as a senior citizen, and I have the
2 usual senior citizen's objections to price raises
3 which you've heard, and there's no point in my telling
4 you about my problems of fixed incomes or something.
5 I find myself voting against lots of tax increases for
6 items I think would be nice but I wonder how I can
7 afford to pay for them.

8 And I think that 5 percent on this thing
9 where -- I came out \$8.40 and you've got 8.50. I
10 thought that was kind of funny. But the government
11 tells us there's no inflation, and we usually don't
12 believe the government either because we think they're
13 liars or because we're not sure they know what they're
14 talking about.

15 And I'm not sure how much inflation there
16 is, but we've got to admit that the company can be
17 expected to look for some increase in price. There's
18 no two ways about that, they're going to have to look
19 for it.

20 I'm appreciative of you people sitting here
21 listening to some of the same stuff over and over, and
22 I know you're doing it a lot of nights, and I can
23 remember when I worked in air pollution control work
24 and the feds gave hearings on air quality and they had
25 seven regions and they went through about five and

1 they started writing their summaries and people were
2 highly irritated because they hadn't had time to even
3 give their testimony yet and they were already
4 summarizing. So I know you're going to hear a lot of
5 the same stuff over.

6 The thing about the increased gas cost at
7 the wellhead and stuff, I don't know the numbers and
8 because of other constraints I wasn't able to get to
9 the prehearing part of this thing. There's going to
10 have to be some increases there, and I don't like it a
11 bit, and I'm going to have to stuff more cracks. I
12 rent some house trailers to people, and I see a lot of
13 people here telling, My gas bill is \$200.

14 Well, I don't know what they live in, but
15 that -- I don't know what they're doing with their
16 gas. I can't understand. There's only two of us. We
17 do some laundry for our grandkids. Our gas bills are
18 nothing like anywhere near that high, and we have a
19 gas dryer and a gas water heater.

20 They need to look at all the potential
21 possibilities of conservation, and they'll cut their
22 own bills down some. They've got to be able to. And
23 I am going to have to trust you as a commission to see
24 how much is a reasonable amount to give these people
25 for increased Arab costs of petroleum and other

1 hydrocarbons, some which are even coming in in that
2 way, because we have so little supply left here.

3 And I don't know how to admonish you to do
4 that correctly. I appreciate your effort. I would
5 like to see it held down as much as possible, and I am
6 not a letter bomber. If you gave them 8.60 instead of
7 the 8.40 or whatever it is I recommended, I will not
8 mail you a letter. Please do your best.

9 Thank you.

10 JUDGE HOPKINS: Thank you, sir. We
11 appreciate that. Karen Enyard is next, and Nia Imani.
12 Is Nia Imani here? All right. Thank you.

13 (Witness sworn.)

14 JUDGE HOPKINS: Please state your spell your
15 name for the court reporter.

16 MS. ENYARD: My name is Karen Enyard,
17 K-a-r-e-n, Enyard, E-n-y-a-r-d. And I -- as a
18 Columbian, as a social worker and as a geriatric
19 nurse, I speak -- I come here to speak for those who
20 are now struggling to pay their bills. A person just
21 left here citing they're going to have problems
22 because they're going to turn off their gas, but many
23 of Columbians are not aware that the gas is already
24 turned off.

25 I have clients who haven't had their gas on

1 since April. They cannot pay this. I wish they
2 could. They can't pay it, and they rely on social
3 agencies in this town, because we are the resource
4 capital of the world, to help them pay their bills.

5 The burden will be not on them but on those
6 social agencies, such as churches, such as all types
7 of different social agencies in this town who are
8 paying these people's utility bills. They are paying
9 AmerenUE.

10 So if AmerenUE wishes to have an increase,
11 they must put something in place. At this point in
12 time, they removed the office, and I know I'm getting
13 into redundancy now, but they removed the office where
14 you can actually speak with a person, and now when
15 you're cut off, they just cut you off twice. They cut
16 your gas off and they cut you off on the phone. They
17 only have to share minimal information to you.

18 What I'm saying here is they need to put in
19 place a program that's user friendly, that actually a
20 person that's on a fixed income, and the working poor
21 are who I'm speaking about, can actually pay this
22 bill. I have people that come in with \$595 bills who
23 cannot be expected to pay when they only are making
24 \$200, \$300 a month.

25 So I ask that you guys please take this into

1 consideration. And I know AmerenUE, I'm sharing this
2 knowledge with people who already have it. You know
3 you cut off a lot of people in this town's gas, and
4 what they're doing now is working and saving to have
5 it come on before winter, and this has been going on
6 for years and years.

7 I was very happy to see all the retired and
8 the elderly people here. It's wonderful. But I was
9 saddened by the fact that we didn't have a lot of
10 young people here, and I want to share with you as to
11 why they're not here. They're working overtime to pay
12 for your proposed increase.

13 And I thank you.

14 JUDGE HOPKINS: Thank you. Any questions,
15 Commissioner Drainer?

16 COMMISSIONER DRAINER: Yes. You work in
17 social work you say?

18 MS. ENYARD: Yes.

19 COMMISSIONER DRAINER: Can you tell me, I --
20 you're right, you're not the first one to mention this
21 closed office. Do you know when they closed their
22 office?

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We can't hear you.

24 COMMISSIONER DRAINER: Excuse me. No one
25 else can speak because our court reporter can only

1 take the testimony from the witness.

2 MS. ENYARD: I'm thinking that it must have
3 been -- it was this year.

4 COMMISSIONER DRAINER: This year?

5 MS. ENYARD: And I thought it was in June.
6 But I'm going to tell you something, this is a college
7 town. We have a lot of elderly people. We have a lot
8 of people coming into this wonderful, the best place
9 to live in America kind of town, but we don't have
10 anyone who we can talk to about our utilities.

11 And I must also say that the lady who
12 complained about the ambulance coming and the fire
13 department coming to her house. Me and the -- I know
14 what she's talking about because I got into a big
15 dispute over the phone with the 911 woman informing
16 her that I wanted AmerenUE, and they fin-- AmerenUE
17 did come, and I want to say that they gave good
18 service. But that is a problem because what you guys
19 have now is a middleman.

20 COMMISSIONER DRAINER: Well, but let me ask
21 about this closed office because this concerns me.
22 You're telling me that just this year they closed.
23 Now, can you tell me where that office was located?

24 MS. ENYARD: Yes. That office was right
25 across the street from the Tribune. What's that

1 street? 4th Street. And I'm telling you --

2 COMMISSIONER DRAINER: Okay. So it was on

3 4th Street?

4 MS. ENYARD: Uh-huh.

5 COMMISSIONER DRAINER: And you --

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: 4th and Walnut.

7 COMMISSIONER DRAINER: Excuse me.

8 JUDGE HOPKINS: Just a minute, please. We

9 can only have one person at a time speaking, and that

10 person needs to be sworn in and standing at the

11 lectern. Our court reporter is like me and you and

12 everybody else, we can only listen to one person at a

13 time --

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: 4th and Walnut.

15 JUDGE HOPKINS: -- please.

16 COMMISSIONER DRAINER: Okay. So there was

17 an office --

18 MS. ENYARD: Yes.

19 COMMISSIONER DRAINER: -- down by the

20 Tribune, and they closed it in the early summer?

21 MS. ENYARD: Yes.

22 COMMISSIONER DRAINER: Now, when they closed

23 the office, the folks that you have that would go to

24 that office to pay, they could pay their monthly bill

25 there, correct?

1 MS. ENYARD: Yeah. There was a drive-up.
2 COMMISSIONER DRAINER: And now they don't?
3 MS. ENYARD: Now you have to send it in the
4 mail.
5 COMMISSIONER DRAINER: Was there any notice
6 to the customers that they were doing away with that
7 office that you're -- that you were aware of?
8 MS. ENYARD: Well, first of all, I'm a kind
9 of girl that likes to have connections. So, of
10 course, I know the girls in the office. So that's how
11 I found out, and I know them now.
12 COMMISSIONER DRAINER: Yeah. Okay. But
13 there's no place else here in Columbia now?
14 MS. ENYARD: No, ma'am. You get a 1-800
15 number, and you have to call that number, you know. I
16 mean, it's really unfriendly. It's just --
17 COMMISSIONER DRAINER: So now you have to --
18 let me get this straight. So now you no longer can go
19 to a drive-up window --
20 MS. ENYARD: No, ma'am.
21 COMMISSIONER DRAINER: -- and pay your bill?
22 MS. ENYARD: No.
23 COMMISSIONER DRAINER: Now you have to mail
24 that bill in?
25 MS. ENYARD: Exactly.

1 COMMISSIONER DRAINER: And you're not even
2 given an envelope to mail that bill in?

3 MS. ENYARD: Of course not. Haven't you
4 seen those silly little things? Someone's got one.

5 COMMISSIONER DRAINER: Well, I'm sure I can
6 get a copy of that. Now, can -- and you may not know
7 this, but if you don't, I will be asking that our
8 staff provide this for us. Do you know if they used
9 to provide you envelopes and was that recently
10 stopped, too?

11 MS. ENYARD: I don't recall them ever --

12 COMMISSIONER DRAINER: Okay. Look at me.

13 MS. ENYARD: I'm sorry. I don't recall. I
14 pay my mother's bill, and I've only got this cute
15 little -- it looks like a postcard. Isn't that
16 lovely? It looks like -- it looks so innocent.

17 COMMISSIONER DRAINER: Except it has numbers
18 on it, sometimes big numbers?

19 MS. ENYARD: Big numbers, uh-huh.

20 COMMISSIONER DRAINER: Okay. Well, I
21 appreciate your answers. I would like to ask our
22 staff to make sure that we have in the record after
23 this public hearing when the company stopped providing
24 envelopes to its customers to pay their bill, No. 1.
25 And I would like to know how many offices like this

1 have been closed this year by AmerenUE so that its
2 customers do not have the convenience in the towns
3 that they are in to pay their bills, and I would like
4 to know if the customers were notified in any bills or
5 in any newspaper ads that those offices were being
6 closed.

7 Now, so the public understands, I'm asking
8 these questions now because the only way I can get
9 answers is on the record. And I've heard your
10 testimony and I've heard these concerns, and I need
11 for my fellow commissioners and myself to have this on
12 the record so when we are deliberating and have their
13 witnesses before us, we can look further into this.

14 And I greatly appreciate you taking the time
15 tonight, all of you, to bring this type of issue to
16 our attention because it is very important.

17 MS. ENYARD: Well, I really ask that you
18 also ask them if they have any type of program that --
19 scholarship program. I would like to know what
20 they're giving back to their customers since they're
21 getting so much in return.

22 COMMISSIONER DRAINER: Thank you very much.

23 JUDGE HOPKINS: Thank you, ma'am.

24 Nia Imani is next. After her will be Dianne
25 Rodgers. Is Dianne Rodgers here? Dianne Rodgers?

1 MS. RODGERS: I'm here.

2 JUDGE HOPKINS: Okay. After Dianne Rodgers
3 is Theresa Goedeke, and she will be our last speaker.

4 (Witness sworn.)

5 JUDGE HOPKINS: Please state and spell your
6 name for the court reporter.

7 MS. IMANI: Nia Imani; Nia, N-i-a, last name
8 I-m-a-n-i, 213 West Worley, Columbia, Missouri.

9 I feel extremely redundant because everybody
10 said everything I was going to say. I was going to
11 sneak out of here. I'm a single mother, own my own
12 home, taking care of my children, not making a whole
13 lot of money. Work in my own home, which means my
14 utilities go up because I'm home all day.

15 I'm blessed because I have a home that's
16 renovated, so my gas bills are not astronomical. But
17 my mother's bill, when she told me how much she was
18 paying in gas bills I could hardly believe it, and I
19 think it has to do with weatherization. I would like
20 to know if AmerenUE has anything in place, since
21 they're making so much money, that there's something
22 in place that could help those people to either
23 weatherize their home so their gas bills won't be as
24 expensive, something that they can give back, as she
25 said -- she took my other one -- something to give

1 back to the community. What are they doing besides
2 lining their own pockets?

3 And that's about it. Everybody said
4 everything else. Thank you.

5 JUDGE HOPKINS: Thank you very much. Just a
6 moment. Go ahead.

7 COMMISSIONER SIMMONS: You've just said that
8 your mother pays a pretty high bill?

9 MS. IMANI: Yeah.

10 COMMISSIONER SIMMONS: Could you give me a
11 ballpark figure of how much she's paying?

12 MS. IMANI: Gosh, she just told me about a
13 bill that was like 250, you know, and that was in the
14 winter, 250, 260. I mean, a gas bill.

15 COMMISSIONER SIMMONS: Small home, large
16 home?

17 MS. IMANI: Oh, gosh, her house is much
18 smaller than mine. Probably it has, like, two --
19 three bedrooms. They have a garage added, but it's
20 small. It's a small home. My home is two or three
21 times as big as that, and my gas bill's nothing like
22 that.

23 COMMISSIONER SIMMONS: She also lives in
24 Columbia?

25 MS. IMANI: Yes, she does.

1 COMMISSIONER SIMMONS: Same vicinity that
2 you live in?

3 MS. IMANI: Yes. I've been smelling gas
4 outside her house for a while, and they just tell her,
5 Oh, it's nothing, it's the sewer, you know. And I'm
6 beginning to wonder if it might not be the gas.

7 MS. BYRNE: Ma'am, could I ask you where
8 your mother's address is? We do need to check out the
9 smell of gas.

10 MS. IMANI: Yes, sir. 709 Cook.

11 MS. BYRNE: 709 Cook?

12 MS. IMANI: Uh-huh.

13 JUDGE HOPKINS: How do you spell Cook?

14 MS. IMANI: C-o-o-k.

15 MS. BYRNE: Have you smelled it recently?

16 MS. IMANI: To me, it's a gassy smell. I
17 smell gas, and I can smell gas usually, but they are
18 insisting that it's sewer.

19 MS. BYRNE: Well, we need to make absolutely
20 sure.

21 MS. IMANI: Thank you.

22 MR. MICHEEL: Ma'am, I would also let you
23 know that in this case the Office of the Public
24 Counsel has proposed a weatherization program for
25 AmerenUE customers, and we've recommended that company

1 implement a weatherization program.

2 MS. IMANI: Great. Thank you.

3 JUDGE HOPKINS: All right. Thank you,
4 ma'am. All right. Dianne Rodgers is next. Theresa
5 Goedeke, would you like to come down and be on deck
6 for the last speaker?

7 (Witness sworn.)

8 JUDGE HOPKINS: Please state and spell your
9 name for the court reporter.

10 MS. RODGERS: Dianne Rodgers, D-i-a-n-e,
11 R-o-d-g-e-r-s. First I want to pass along, this is a
12 notice that someone just gave me to give you about the
13 closing of the office, the actual -- the actual date.

14 JUDGE HOPKINS: Thank you.

15 MS. RODGERS: Anyway, first I just wanted to
16 say that I'm one of the people that also missed that
17 office here, but I hope that you don't put in a new
18 office and give us the rate increase to justify paying
19 for a new office again.

20 Okay. But I think for me the biggest irony
21 that I found about this whole thing is when the merger
22 first happened there was a notice, a letter, I think,
23 that said -- a real cheery letter that said,
24 Everything's the same, nothing's changing but the
25 name. And then after a period of time our office

1 closed, and then now this tiny slip of paper, what was
2 it, last month where, in very small print, I started
3 to see a rate increase, and I started to actually just
4 throw this thing away seriously because I thought,
5 well, you know maybe a little rate increase, and then
6 I saw \$10 a month and I couldn't believe it.

7 And I concur with everyone. I oppose the
8 rate increase. I concur with everyone and all, very
9 sympathetic to everybody's particular reason for not
10 being able to handle that payment.

11 I think one group that hasn't been mentioned
12 also is the University students. I teach at the
13 University, and I'd have to say that some of them are
14 just here for nine months. Some of them are here the
15 whole year round, and not all of them are having mommy
16 and daddy pay for their bills. They work so much.
17 Someone just mentioned that might be why some of them
18 aren't here. I'm always amazed at how hard these
19 students work and go to school while carrying a full
20 load.

21 So I know that for them this is also going
22 to be a complete hardship, and some of them probably
23 won't be able to make that payment and then it's going
24 to fall on someone else. Anyway, I oppose.

25 JUDGE HOPKINS: Thank you, ma'am. We

1 appreciate your testimony. Theresa -- Theresa --

2 MS. GOEDEKE: Goedeke.

3 JUDGE HOPKINS: Goedeke. All right. We
4 have one more after Theresa Goedeke, Karen Sue Brown.
5 If you could come down here and be on deck, Karen Sue
6 Brown.

7 (Witness sworn.)

8 MS. GOEDEKE: My name is Theresa Goedeke,
9 T-h-e-r-e-s-a. My last name is Goedeke, G-o-e-d, as
10 in dog, e-k-e.

11 And I want to first start by saying that I'm
12 one of these desensitized people that when I get a
13 little card in the mail, we get a lot of these these
14 days that say you're getting a rate increase, and I
15 always read them, and I always go, Okay, it's another
16 rate increase. And I read this one, and at first I
17 thought it said \$10 a year, and I was about ready to
18 say, Well, okay, this is another one of those things,
19 but then I read it more closely and I noticed that it
20 said \$10 a month as an estimated increase.

21 And now I've heard today that it could even
22 be more considering other costs of the fuel and these
23 things. I've also been paying more attention to the
24 fuel situation.

25 And I don't think -- one reason that we're

1 all here, and I think that one reason these people are
2 here is because we don't have a choice. I mean, if
3 Sprint calls me and tells me they're increasing my
4 rates, I have a choice now. It may not be a great
5 choice.

6 But if AmerenUE calls me and tells me or
7 sends me a very plain notice, with very tiny print I
8 might add, that they're raising our rates, I don't
9 have a choice and I will have to pay that. And I
10 think we've talked about today that there's a lot of
11 people on fixed incomes. There's a lot of working
12 poor. There are a lot of elderly. There are people
13 living on retirement. I'm a graduate student. I
14 don't make an income that allows -- I'm budgeted, just
15 like everybody else. And these things have to be
16 taken into consideration.

17 I would urge the Commission when they're
18 making this decision to keep in mind and don't think
19 of this as in a vacuum in terms of what the company
20 needs in terms of profits or what is due their
21 shareholders. I realize the stock market is not
22 performing as it has been, but I don't know that that
23 should be borne on the backs of residential customers
24 of this company.

25 The things that you need to keep in mind, I

1 mean, all these things are going on at the same time.
2 We have people being turned off of welfare rolls at
3 this time. We have people that are working for
4 minimum wage jobs trying to support families with four
5 children or more, working mothers trying to support
6 children without help, and these things are important.
7 We haven't had a wage increase in this country for
8 many years now, and we're dealing with that.

9 This is also a time when companies are
10 starting to reduce their health care benefits for
11 customers -- or employees, excuse me, employees, and
12 these kind of things and families are having to pick
13 up the burden of that. We have you know, these
14 problems. All these things are going on at this time.
15 We have gas prices going up. We have all these
16 different things. This is not something that's just
17 affecting one payment every month. This is huge.

18 We talk about taxes being increased in
19 Columbia for very good reasons, I think. Many of us
20 voted for those reasons and agreed with those. But
21 all these things need to be considered. It's not just
22 \$10 a month to people who have very strict budgets and
23 may have to make a decision at the end of the month
24 whether or not they're going to pay their gas bill or
25 purchase food or buy their children shoes.

1 I mean, this is a very, very important
2 decision. I would urge the Commission to please
3 consider these things when considering this very
4 excessive increase.

5 Thank you.

6 JUDGE HOPKINS: Thank you, ma'am. Any
7 questions, Commissioner Drainer?

8 COMMISSIONER DRAINER: No. Thank you very
9 much for your comments. We appreciate you coming.

10 JUDGE HOPKINS: Thank you. Commissioner
11 Simmons?

12 COMMISSIONER SIMMONS: Thank you.

13 JUDGE HOPKINS: Karen Sue Brown, you get to
14 be our --

15 MS. KEELY: You sound like my mother calling
16 me.

17 JUDGE HOPKINS: You get to be the last
18 speaker.

19 MS. KEELY: As you know my name is
20 Karen -- oh, sorry.

21 (Witness sworn.)

22 JUDGE HOPKINS: Thank you. Please state and
23 spell your name for the court reporter.

24 MS. BROWN: Karen Sue Brown, as in the color
25 brown. I live at 200B Unity Drive here in Columbia,

1 which I'm one of the people many of the people are
2 talking about. I never knew what people were talking
3 about, senior citizens on fixed income until I became
4 Social Security disabled.

5 And I've always heard in the past people
6 talking about them, you know, not having the money
7 to -- like you say, do you pay for your medicines or
8 do you eat today? Do you pay gas or do you, you know,
9 pay your electric or, you know, what do you do
10 without? Do you pay your rent or do you pay that and
11 get evicted because you ain't got the money for your
12 rent?

13 I never knew what people were talking about
14 until I became on Social Security disability, which is
15 about November '96, so within this past four years.
16 What I say, I'm not trying to disrespect anybody in
17 any way because I was raised in the old school. I'm
18 here to say what's on my mind and hopefully I'll do
19 it.

20 If it was my choice, with the gas going up,
21 I'd rather have a fireplace and chuck my own wood.
22 That's not my choice. I live in low income housing,
23 and so I have to -- and I live in the Columbia housing
24 projects to be exact, and I live in the single
25 dwellings which were originally designed for the

1 senior citizens slash now single people.

2 My roof, like, in my kitchen is about nine
3 or ten feet tall. So I have to pay to heat my roof to
4 work its way down to heat the rest of my apartment,
5 which you have -- you know, in a 40-year-old building
6 you have nothing to say about that, but again we're
7 talking about our winter bills and things.

8 And so, like I said, I'm on fixed income,
9 and I think that amount is outrageous. My Social
10 Security income has went in the past three years I --
11 the first year I got a \$10 raise for the year. The
12 second was \$6, and then as of January this year \$12.
13 So we're talking \$28 in three years total monthly
14 raise, you know. So that's an average of \$9 a
15 month -- a year raise, and you're talking about
16 taking, you know, \$10.

17 And if you raise that amount, which, as you
18 say, is \$12 million that you're in need of or
19 14 percent, then should I expect next month to hear
20 the electric company say, Oh, well, if they can get by
21 with it, let's us come and do it, too. Let's see what
22 we can do. Electric company, telephone company, well,
23 let's get our bid in, too.

24 My salary, as I say, is not even keeping up
25 with the cost of living. So I'm one of those

1 people -- remember this face. I'm one of those people
2 that's going to be going to the HDC office that they
3 talked about for their assistance that Karen Enyard
4 talked about. I'm one of those people she's going to
5 be giving help.

6 I have a high school diploma, some
7 education. I would like to continue -- I am in
8 default in my student loan right now, but I'd like to
9 continue with some education and further whatever.
10 You never stop learning. You never stop growing. But
11 the thing I'm -- and I had a problem finding this
12 tonight, again with the other person. I felt that
13 it's too small of a place if you wanted a show out.

14 It should have been some place bigger
15 because space was limited, and I'm sure it might have
16 been a few people like myself almost turned around and
17 left just for the fact I saw it was crowded. Oh, I
18 ain't going to be in here with this. You know, it
19 should have been an air conditioned place because the
20 temperature said 108 outside today, you know.

21 And so -- and then the writing of the card,
22 as you say, it was so small. Any time you're
23 advertising for MU basketball game, here's the writing
24 and here's the sign, go this way, but when we come to
25 this sign tonight, there should have been some signs

1 on the trees down Broadway, left, turn right here,
2 park here, something to distinguish, because I assumed
3 it was right at the corner of College and Broadway,
4 right in the Commons or that building on the west --
5 south side, and then it's just at the last minute that
6 I found out that it was this building here.

7 You know, I'm going to start needing classes
8 pretty soon because I just barely saw the numbers, and
9 then, as they said, to find parking here. I almost
10 came up and said, Forget it, go home today, but I hung
11 in, you heard what I had to say, and that's all.
12 That's all, folks.

13 JUDGE HOPKINS: Thank you. Any questions?

14 COMMISSIONER DRAINER: Ms. Brown, can I ask,
15 did you ever use the office to pay your bills before
16 they closed it?

17 MS. BROWN: Yes. I'm the type of person
18 that likes -- I'm kind of a people person, too, but
19 every month I like to hand deliver so there's no
20 doubt. It got lost in the mail. No, you got my
21 bills, because I have actually had some stuff lost in
22 the mail. So I hand delivered to there every month my
23 bill so I knew they were paid.

24 COMMISSIONER DRAINER: Is it more of an
25 inconvenience for you now that they closed?

1 MS. BROWN: Without a doubt. Like they
2 said, you've either got to -- you can pay at the
3 grocery store, Gerbe's or whatever, but if you pass
4 through or you're late paying or want to pay a
5 different amount or something, you know, they're just
6 a grocery store. So they can't help you like
7 AmerenUE.

8 So you really need some kind of place there
9 that can be right there and assist you with some kind
10 of human communication, you know. I realize we're in
11 a time of all this telecommunications, but there's
12 some times you still need that human touch or
13 whatever, you know. We need to get back to that.

14 COMMISSIONER DRAINER: Okay. I appreciate
15 your comments. Also, I would apologize to everyone
16 for the location. In the past when I've been at
17 public meetings here in Columbia we've been at the
18 Chamber. Obviously we scheduled this for Monday night
19 not realizing the Chamber had its meetings on Monday
20 night.

21 And earlier the Law Judge and I were talking
22 that we need to make sure that the folks back in our
23 office that schedule these meetings know that in
24 Columbia we need to be much more -- do another day of
25 the week so that we can have it in a facility that has

1 better parking, is more acceptable. I do apologize
2 for that.

3 MS. BROWN: Like I said, I'm not even a
4 political type person. I'm not normally even
5 interested in this kind of stuff. When it affects my
6 dollar amount, I've got to come.

7 COMMISSIONER DRAINER: I'm glad you came,
8 though, and took the time to try to find this, I'm
9 glad you all did. I appreciate it.

10 MS. BROWN: And I also want to say, the
11 ratio of that \$10, like I said, it sounds -- you know,
12 that sounds tiny to you-all, but that ratio of my
13 income, which is under 600 a month, and I budget every
14 month, so it fits in real tight.

15 In comparison to you guys, what if I was to
16 say I'm going to take 25 percent of your-all's salary
17 and never give it back to you in taxes or something?
18 That's the same way. You would raise cane about that,
19 is what I'm feeling right now about this \$10. So I
20 just want to explain it to you in a way you understand
21 it.

22 COMMISSIONER SIMMONS: Ms. Brown, I heard
23 you talk about where you live. Was the office that
24 you went to, was it in walking distance of where you
25 live?

1 MS. BROWN: Yes. It's, I would say,
2 approximate -- it's less than a mile. Probably three
3 quarters of a mile.

4 COMMISSIONER SIMMONS: Okay. Thank you.

5 MS. BROWN: So it's in walking distance.

6 JUDGE HOPKINS: Thank you.

7 If there are no more witnesses, this hearing
8 will be adjourned. We thank everyone for coming out
9 tonight. Thank you very much.

10 WHEREUPON, the public hearing was concluded.

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