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BEFORE THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION  
STATE OF MISSOURI

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS  
LOCAL PUBLIC HEARING

In the Matter of the Request )  
of Liberty Utilities )  
(Midstates Natural Gas) Corp. )  
d/b/a Liberty to Implement a ) File No GR-2024-0106  
General Rate Increase for )  
Natural Gas Service in the )  
Missouri Service Areas of the )  
Company )

Wednesday, SEPTEMBER 11, 2024  
12:27 P.M.

Sikeston City Hall  
105 East Center Street  
Sikeston, MO 63801

VOLUME 8

KENNETH J. SEYER, Presiding  
SENIOR REGULATORY LAW JUDGE

KAYLA HAHN, CHAIR  
MAIDA J. COLEMAN  
JASON R. HOLSMAN

Reported by:

COLIN WALLIS  
LEXITAS LEGAL

\* \* \* \* \*

(The hearing began at 12:27 p.m.)

JUDGE SEYER: All right, let's go on the record. Today is September 11th, 2024. The time is 12:25 p.m. My name is Ken Seyer. I am the regulatory law judge with the Missouri Public Service Commission, and I will preside over this hearing.

The Commission has set this time for a local public hearing to give members of the public a chance to comment about Liberty's general rate increase application, which is commission file number GR-2024-0106.

The Commission regulates the rates charged by public-utility companies in Missouri to ensure that those rates are just and reasonable. The Commission also regulates the quality of service and safety of operations of public utilities. There are five commissioners. They are appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate. The Commission employs a staff of engineers, accountants, attorneys, financial analysts and other specialists in the field of utility regulation.

1           With me here today to my left is  
2 Commissioner Maida Coleman, and, online, we  
3 have Chair Kayla Hahn and Commissioner Jason  
4 Holsman. The commissioners have not made any  
5 decisions in this case and cannot answer  
6 questions today because they have to remain  
7 impartial until after all the evidence is  
8 presented at the evidentiary hearing in this  
9 matter that is scheduled to take place next  
10 month. At this time, would the commissioners  
11 like to make any opening remarks?

12           COMMISSIONER COLEMAN: I would, Judge.

13           JUDGE SEYER: All right, Commissioner  
14 Coleman.

15           COMMISSIONER COLEMAN: Thank you, Judge.  
16 I'd like to say good afternoon to everyone here  
17 and to thank those who have come with questions  
18 that you posed, I take it, in the previous  
19 meeting that started at noon but also those who  
20 have signed up to testify today to give us  
21 information.

22           Please know that we have other  
23 commissioners online that are listening in to  
24 this hearing who will also be taking into  
25 consideration your comments today. I'd like to

1 also thank those who have traveled here from  
2 across this state, not only those with the  
3 company and those customers that are here, but  
4 also our staff and others that are present. We  
5 thank you for your attention to today's hearing  
6 and, again, appreciate you being here.

7 JUDGE SEYER: Would any other  
8 Commissioners like to make opening remarks?  
9 All right. Hearing none, there are attorneys  
10 here today representing the parties in this  
11 matter. For the record, would each of you  
12 identify yourselves and state which party  
13 you're representing? And I'll begin with the  
14 utility.

15 MS. GRUBBS: Thank you, Your Honor.  
16 Jermain Grubbs, I'm appearing on behalf of  
17 Liberty Utilities Midstates Natural Gas  
18 Corporation doing business as Liberty, thank  
19 you.

20 MR. STACEY: Scott Stacey and Tracy  
21 Johnson. We represent Staff at 200 Madison  
22 Street, Jefferson City, Missouri 65101.

23 MS. MARTIN: My name is Anna Martin, and I  
24 am an associate counsel with the Office of the  
25 Public Counsel.

1 JUDGE SEYER: Okay. The way we will  
2 proceed today will be to call the names listed  
3 on the sign-up sheet in order that you signed  
4 up, and there are two people on the list today.  
5 When I call your name, please step up to the  
6 microphone. I will place you under oath and  
7 ask that you state and spell your name, then  
8 you can offer your comments to the Commission.  
9 We will try to limit comments to five minutes  
10 per person.

11 Once you are finished with your comments,  
12 if you'll remain at the microphone in case  
13 there are questions from the commissioners or  
14 the attorneys for the parties. So, first name  
15 on the list is Rhonda Council.

16 (Rhonda Council sworn.)

17 JUDGE SEYER: Could you spell your name  
18 for the record?

19 MS. COUNCIL: Rhonda, R-h-o-n-d-a.  
20 Council, C-o-u-n-c-i-l.

21 JUDGE SEYER: All right, proceed with your  
22 comments.

23 MS. COUNCIL: Okay, I'm here as a  
24 consumer, but also I work in the City of  
25 Sikeston, so we posted this information on our

1 Facebook page; and we did get a few comments on  
2 our Facebook page, so I will read some of those  
3 comments; and I will hand them to whoever needs  
4 to get them after the meeting.

5 Some of the comments we got were, "Like  
6 stuff isn't expensive enough.

7 Look at this crap.

8 This is bad for people on fixed income. We  
9 don't get a raise.

10 Thank God I have all electric.

11 I have never understood why the consumers  
12 should pay for technology improvements designed  
13 to make the company more profitable. That  
14 should not be our burden.

15 I hope someone who could attend the  
16 meeting brings up not being able to take care  
17 of business in person. Having to go through  
18 the website is a difficult process for us that  
19 don't have access to internet or having to call  
20 a number that is not connected.

21 I have to work on the 11th at noon.  
22 Please voice my opinion as I vote no. This is  
23 a ridiculously high increase when they are  
24 making a profit.

25 That's crazy. There are a lot of elderly

1 people that live on a fixed income. Guess that  
2 doesn't matter.

3 28 percent? That's ridiculous. Why don't  
4 they use their profits to reinvest in their own  
5 company? Ask their stockholders to foot the  
6 bill.

7 I can't be there, but someone be sure to  
8 tell them that I vote no for a rate increase.  
9 Looks like the CEO and shareholders want more  
10 profits to fight their inflation while pinching  
11 our paychecks. I mean, it's right there, to  
12 give investors a 10.8 percent return!"

13 I wish the bank paid that much interest on  
14 my money; that you can tell the bank you want a  
15 10.8 percent return, and that you just charge  
16 the other customers.

17 That's all the comments I have from  
18 Facebook. Now, me as a consumer, I'm not happy  
19 with a \$15.87 increase. I know it sounds like  
20 it's a minute number, but over a year, that's  
21 \$190 plus. I think about my mother. She's on  
22 a fixed income. A lot of the people that I  
23 know are on fixed incomes, and that's a lot to  
24 me.

25 Unfortunately, they can't be here to talk.

1 I can't be their voice. I can only assume this  
2 is how they're feeling if I feel this way. I'm  
3 blessed to have a job and can afford to pay my  
4 bill, but I stay by myself. My bill in the  
5 wintertime is over \$200 already, almost 300.

6 Yeah, this seems, again, like a small  
7 increase; but, to me, I don't think it's fair.  
8 I know you probably already have your mind made  
9 up on what you want to do, but I just wanted to  
10 voice my opinion. I'm not in favor of the rate  
11 increase.

12 JUDGE SEYER: And, Ms. Council, may I ask  
13 what city -- may I ask what city you live in  
14 and your mother lives in?

15 MS. COUNCIL: Sikeston.

16 JUDGE SEYER: Okay.

17 MS. COUNCIL: Uh-huh.

18 JUDGE SEYER: Commissioner Coleman has a  
19 question for you.

20 COMMISSIONER COLEMAN: Thank you,  
21 Ms. Council, for coming today to give us this  
22 information. You said you worked for the City  
23 of Sikeston, also?

24 MS. COUNCIL: Yes.

25 COMMISSIONER COLEMAN: What's your role



1 with the City?

2 MS. COUNCIL: I'm a city clerk.

3 COMMISSIONER COLEMAN: City clerk, okay.

4 I do want to also assure you that we have not  
5 made up our minds. You know, I do know that  
6 that would be the thought that people would  
7 have because you're dealing with a utility  
8 company, and many people feel that they can get  
9 no assistance when it's them against the  
10 utility company. But please be aware that we  
11 five commissioners who will make this decision,  
12 will take into account all of the issues  
13 regarding this case, and I just want to thank  
14 you for being here today. We appreciate it.

15 MS. COUNCIL: I appreciate that, and on  
16 another note: back in 2018, we had this same  
17 discussion. I was probably the only one here  
18 to voice my opinion on that one, and the rate  
19 increase still happened. So, that's why I made  
20 that comment I just made.

21 COMMISSIONER COLEMAN: Thank you. I  
22 appreciate your information.

23 MS. COUNCIL: You're welcome.

24 JUDGE SEYER: Do any of the other  
25 Commissioners have any questions or comments

1 for Ms. Council?

2 COMMISSIONER HOLSMAN: No questions,  
3 Judge. Commissioner Holsman.

4 JUDGE SEYER: Okay, thank you,  
5 Commissioner Holsman. All right, Mr. Cohen.

6 MR. COHEN: Good afternoon.

7 JUDGE SEYER: Good afternoon. Would you  
8 raise your right hand and be sworn today?

9 (Paul Cohen sworn.)

10 JUDGE SEYER: Thank you. And your name?

11 MR. COHEN: Paul Cohen, P-a-u-l,  
12 C-o-h-e-n.

13 JUDGE SEYER: Okay. Where do you reside?

14 MR. COHEN: I live here in Sikeston.

15 JUDGE SEYER: Okay, go ahead.

16 MR. COHEN: I was noticing, and I brought  
17 this up in the thing, the open question, the  
18 rate increase for Southwest Missouri Region  
19 is -- the percentage is higher than the rest of  
20 the state, and this is the poorest area,  
21 especially south of here, in the State of  
22 Missouri with limited resources for people to  
23 get the jobs, good-paying jobs. It's a lot of  
24 farming. And I just wondered -- just don't  
25 think it's fair that we have to pay more down

1 here with less choices. I'm also on a fixed  
2 income, and I do not agree with this raise or  
3 rate increase. This year my income went up \$28  
4 a month, but by the time my home -- homeowner's  
5 insurance, my car insurance hit, I was in the  
6 hole after that.

7 So, every penny does count. Thank  
8 goodness I do have a wife that is working. She  
9 also worked for a community action agency for  
10 13 years here in town, helping people with  
11 their utility bills, and we are just right  
12 above the threshold where we can't get any  
13 help. And it's semi-curious that there are  
14 certain people -- I know she said there's  
15 certain clients that come in and got help  
16 constantly. But I just don't think it's right,  
17 as Rhonda said, for the consumers to have to  
18 pay for the increase so the stockholders can  
19 get their return better.

20 And I do feel like, as she does, sometimes  
21 the minds have been made up. I know that's not  
22 the case, as Ms. Coleman said. I hope this  
23 increase does not pass; or, if it does, just a  
24 very little, and the rate increase here is  
25 not -- it's not more than what it is up north.

1 And I appreciate everybody's time coming out  
2 here and listening. That's all I can say.

3 JUDGE SEYER: Okay.

4 COMMISSIONER COLEMAN: Thank you.

5 JUDGE SEYER: Do any of the commissioners  
6 have questions for Mr. Cohen? All right,  
7 hearing none, do any of the attorneys have any  
8 questions for Mr. Cohen? And I forgot to ask,  
9 did any of the attorneys have questions for  
10 Ms. Council?

11 MR. STACEY: No, Judge.

12 JUDGE SEYER: All right, thank you. Thank  
13 you, Mr. Cohen. Now, those were the only two  
14 people that were on the sign-up sheet. Is  
15 there anyone else in the hearing room that did  
16 not sign up that would like to testify?

17 All right, hearing none, if after this  
18 hearing concludes today, if you would like to  
19 add additional comments or if you were unable  
20 to be here today for the hearing and would like  
21 to submit comments, you can do that via the  
22 Commission's website [psc.mo.gov](http://psc.mo.gov). On the right  
23 side of that web page is a link titled Submit  
24 Comments. You click on that. You can enter  
25 comments, and we will ask that you reference

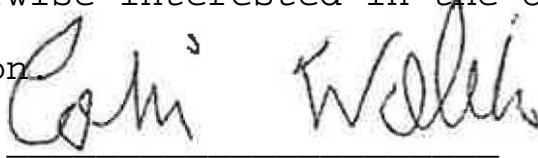
1 this case number, which is, again,  
2 GR-2024-0106. And if you would like to contact  
3 the Office of Public Counsel, you can e-mail  
4 them at mopco@opc.mo.gov.

5 All right, would any of the commissioners  
6 like to give closing remarks? All right,  
7 hearing none, thank you all for your  
8 participation today, and the hearing is  
9 adjourned. We're off the record.

10 (Ending time of the record: 12:41 p.m.)

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1 I, Colin Wallis, in and for the State of  
2 Missouri do hereby certify that the witness  
3 whose testimony appears in the foregoing  
4 Examination Under Oath was duly sworn by me;  
5 that the testimony of the said witness was  
6 taken by me to the best of my ability and  
7 thereafter reduced to typewriting under my  
8 direction; that I am neither counsel for,  
9 related to, nor employed by any of the parties  
10 to the action in which this examination was  
11 taken, and further that I am not relative or  
12 employee of any attorney or counsel employed by  
13 the parties thereto, nor financially or  
14 otherwise interested in the outcome of the  
15 action.

  
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17 within and for the State of Missouri  
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<b>\$</b>	<b>afford</b> 8:3	<b>burden</b> 6:14	9,13,14,17,22 5:8
<b>\$15.87</b> 7:19	<b>afternoon</b> 3:16 10:6,7	<b>business</b> 4:18 6:17	<b>Commission's</b> 12:22
<b>\$190</b> 7:21	<b>agency</b> 11:9	<b>C</b>	<b>Commissioner</b> 3:2,3,12,13,15 8:18,20,25 9:3,21 10:2,3,5 12:4
<b>\$200</b> 8:5	<b>agree</b> 11:2	<b>C-O-H-E-N</b> 10:12	<b>commissioners</b> 2:20 3:4,10,23 4:8 5:13 9:11,25 12:5
<b>\$28</b> 11:3	<b>ahead</b> 10:15	<b>C-O-U-N-C-I-L</b> 5:20	<b>community</b> 11:9
<b>1</b>	<b>analysts</b> 2:23	<b>call</b> 5:2,5 6:19	<b>companies</b> 2:15
<b>10.8</b> 7:12,15	<b>Anna</b> 4:23	<b>car</b> 11:5	<b>company</b> 4:3 6:13 7:5 9:8,10
<b>11th</b> 2:4 6:21	<b>appearing</b> 4:16	<b>care</b> 6:16	<b>concludes</b> 12:18
<b>12:25</b> 2:5	<b>application</b> 2:12	<b>case</b> 3:5 5:12 9:13 11:22	<b>confirmed</b> 2:21
<b>12:27</b> 2:2	<b>appointed</b> 2:20	<b>CEO</b> 7:9	<b>connected</b> 6:20
<b>13</b> 11:10	<b>area</b> 10:20	<b>Chair</b> 3:3	<b>consideration</b> 3:25
<b>2</b>	<b>assistance</b> 9:9	<b>chance</b> 2:11	<b>constantly</b> 11:16
<b>200</b> 4:21	<b>associate</b> 4:24	<b>charge</b> 7:15	<b>consumer</b> 5:24 7:18
<b>2018</b> 9:16	<b>assume</b> 8:1	<b>charged</b> 2:14	<b>consumers</b> 6:11 11:17
<b>2024</b> 2:4	<b>assure</b> 9:4	<b>choices</b> 11:1	<b>Corporation</b> 4:18
<b>28</b> 7:3	<b>attend</b> 6:15	<b>city</b> 4:22 5:24 8:13,22 9:1,2,3	<b>Council</b> 5:15,16, 19,20,23 8:12,15, 17,21,24 9:2,15, 23 10:1 12:10
<b>3</b>	<b>attention</b> 4:5	<b>clerk</b> 9:2,3	<b>counsel</b> 4:24,25
<b>300</b> 8:5	<b>attorneys</b> 2:23 4:9 5:14 12:7,9	<b>click</b> 12:24	<b>count</b> 11:7
<b>6</b>	<b>aware</b> 9:10	<b>clients</b> 11:15	<b>crap</b> 6:7
<b>65101</b> 4:22	<b>B</b>	<b>Cohen</b> 10:5,6,9, 11,14,16 12:6,8, 13	<b>crazy</b> 6:25
<b>A</b>	<b>back</b> 9:16	<b>Coleman</b> 3:2,12, 14,15 8:18,20,25 9:3,21 11:22 12:4	<b>customers</b> 4:3 7:16
<b>access</b> 6:19	<b>bad</b> 6:8	<b>comment</b> 2:11 9:20	
<b>account</b> 9:12	<b>bank</b> 7:13,14	<b>comments</b> 3:25 5:8,9,11,22 6:1,3, 5 7:17 9:25 12:19, 21,24,25	
<b>accountants</b> 2:23	<b>began</b> 2:2	<b>commission</b> 2:7,	
<b>action</b> 11:9	<b>begin</b> 4:13		
<b>add</b> 12:19	<b>behalf</b> 4:16		
<b>additional</b> 12:19	<b>bill</b> 7:6 8:4		
	<b>bills</b> 11:11		
	<b>blessed</b> 8:3		
	<b>brings</b> 6:16		
	<b>brought</b> 10:16		

<b>D</b>	<p><b>finished</b> 5:11</p> <p><b>fixed</b> 6:8 7:1,22,23 11:1</p> <p><b>foot</b> 7:5</p> <p><b>forgot</b> 12:8</p>	<p><b>Holsman</b> 3:4 10:2, 3,5</p> <p><b>home</b> 11:4</p> <p><b>homeowner's</b> 11:4</p> <p><b>Honor</b> 4:15</p> <p><b>hope</b> 6:15 11:22</p>	<p><b>Johnson</b> 4:21</p> <p><b>judge</b> 2:3,6 3:12, 13,15 4:7 5:1,17, 21 8:12,16,18 9:24 10:3,4,7,10, 13,15 12:3,5,11, 12</p>
	<b>G</b>	<b>I</b>	<b>K</b>
	<p><b>Gas</b> 4:17</p> <p><b>general</b> 2:12</p> <p><b>give</b> 2:10 3:20 7:12 8:21</p> <p><b>God</b> 6:10</p> <p><b>good</b> 3:16 10:6,7</p> <p><b>good-paying</b> 10:23</p> <p><b>goodness</b> 11:8</p> <p><b>Governor</b> 2:21</p> <p><b>GR-2024-0106</b> 2:13</p> <p><b>Grubbs</b> 4:15,16</p> <p><b>Guess</b> 7:1</p>	<p><b>identify</b> 4:12</p> <p><b>impartial</b> 3:7</p> <p><b>improvements</b> 6:12</p> <p><b>income</b> 6:8 7:1,22 11:2,3</p> <p><b>incomes</b> 7:23</p> <p><b>increase</b> 2:12 6:23 7:8,19 8:7,11 9:19 10:18 11:3,18,23, 24</p> <p><b>inflation</b> 7:10</p> <p><b>information</b> 3:21 5:25 8:22 9:22</p> <p><b>insurance</b> 11:5</p> <p><b>interest</b> 7:13</p> <p><b>internet</b> 6:19</p> <p><b>investors</b> 7:12</p> <p><b>issues</b> 9:12</p>	<p><b>Kayla</b> 3:3</p> <p><b>Ken</b> 2:5</p>
<b>E</b>			<b>L</b>
<p><b>elderly</b> 6:25</p> <p><b>electric</b> 6:10</p> <p><b>employs</b> 2:22</p> <p><b>engineers</b> 2:22</p> <p><b>ensure</b> 2:16</p> <p><b>enter</b> 12:24</p> <p><b>everybody's</b> 12:1</p> <p><b>evidence</b> 3:7</p> <p><b>evidentiary</b> 3:8</p> <p><b>expensive</b> 6:6</p>			<p><b>law</b> 2:6</p> <p><b>left</b> 3:1</p> <p><b>Liberty</b> 4:17,18</p> <p><b>Liberty's</b> 2:11</p> <p><b>limit</b> 5:9</p> <p><b>limited</b> 10:22</p> <p><b>link</b> 12:23</p> <p><b>list</b> 5:4,15</p> <p><b>listed</b> 5:2</p> <p><b>listening</b> 3:23 12:2</p> <p><b>live</b> 7:1 8:13 10:14</p> <p><b>lives</b> 8:14</p> <p><b>local</b> 2:10</p> <p><b>lot</b> 6:25 7:22,23 10:23</p>
<b>F</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>J</b>	<b>M</b>
<p><b>Facebook</b> 6:1,2 7:18</p> <p><b>fair</b> 8:7 10:25</p> <p><b>farming</b> 10:24</p> <p><b>favor</b> 8:10</p> <p><b>feel</b> 8:2 9:8 11:20</p> <p><b>feeling</b> 8:2</p> <p><b>field</b> 2:24</p> <p><b>fight</b> 7:10</p> <p><b>file</b> 2:13</p> <p><b>financial</b> 2:23</p>	<p><b>Hahn</b> 3:3</p> <p><b>hand</b> 6:3 10:8</p> <p><b>happened</b> 9:19</p> <p><b>happy</b> 7:18</p> <p><b>hearing</b> 2:2,8,10 3:8,24 4:5,9 12:7, 15,17,18,20</p> <p><b>helping</b> 11:10</p> <p><b>high</b> 6:23</p> <p><b>higher</b> 10:19</p> <p><b>hit</b> 11:5</p> <p><b>hole</b> 11:6</p>	<p><b>Jason</b> 3:3</p> <p><b>Jefferson</b> 4:22</p> <p><b>Jermain</b> 4:16</p> <p><b>job</b> 8:3</p> <p><b>jobs</b> 10:23</p>	<p><b>made</b> 3:4 8:8 9:5, 19,20 11:21</p> <p><b>Madison</b> 4:21</p> <p><b>Maida</b> 3:2</p> <p><b>make</b> 3:11 4:8 6:13 9:11</p>



<p><b>making</b> 6:24</p> <p><b>Martin</b> 4:23</p> <p><b>matter</b> 3:9 4:11 7:2</p> <p><b>meeting</b> 3:19 6:4, 16</p> <p><b>members</b> 2:10</p> <p><b>microphone</b> 5:6, 12</p> <p><b>Midstates</b> 4:17</p> <p><b>mind</b> 8:8</p> <p><b>minds</b> 9:5 11:21</p> <p><b>minute</b> 7:20</p> <p><b>minutes</b> 5:9</p> <p><b>Missouri</b> 2:6,15 4:22 10:18,22</p> <p><b>money</b> 7:14</p> <p><b>month</b> 3:10 11:4</p> <p><b>mother</b> 7:21 8:14</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>N</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>names</b> 5:2</p> <p><b>Natural</b> 4:17</p> <p><b>noon</b> 3:19 6:21</p> <p><b>north</b> 11:25</p> <p><b>note</b> 9:16</p> <p><b>noticing</b> 10:16</p> <p><b>number</b> 2:13 6:20 7:20</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>O</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>oath</b> 5:6</p> <p><b>offer</b> 5:8</p> <p><b>Office</b> 4:24</p> <p><b>online</b> 3:2,23</p>	<p><b>open</b> 10:17</p> <p><b>opening</b> 3:11 4:8</p> <p><b>operations</b> 2:18</p> <p><b>opinion</b> 6:22 8:10 9:18</p> <p><b>order</b> 5:3</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>P</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>P-A-U-L</b> 10:11</p> <p><b>p.m.</b> 2:2,5</p> <p><b>paid</b> 7:13</p> <p><b>parties</b> 4:10 5:14</p> <p><b>party</b> 4:12</p> <p><b>pass</b> 11:23</p> <p><b>paul</b> 10:9,11</p> <p><b>pay</b> 6:12 8:3 10:25 11:18</p> <p><b>paychecks</b> 7:11</p> <p><b>penny</b> 11:7</p> <p><b>people</b> 5:4 6:8 7:1, 22 9:6,8 10:22 11:10,14 12:14</p> <p><b>percent</b> 7:3,12,15</p> <p><b>percentage</b> 10:19</p> <p><b>person</b> 5:10 6:17</p> <p><b>pinching</b> 7:10</p> <p><b>place</b> 3:9 5:6</p> <p><b>poorest</b> 10:20</p> <p><b>posed</b> 3:18</p> <p><b>posted</b> 5:25</p> <p><b>present</b> 4:4</p> <p><b>presented</b> 3:8</p> <p><b>preside</b> 2:7</p> <p><b>previous</b> 3:18</p>	<p><b>proceed</b> 5:2,21</p> <p><b>process</b> 6:18</p> <p><b>profit</b> 6:24</p> <p><b>profitable</b> 6:13</p> <p><b>profits</b> 7:4,10</p> <p><b>psc.mo.gov.</b> 12:22</p> <p><b>public</b> 2:7,10,11, 19 4:25</p> <p><b>public-utility</b> 2:15</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Q</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>quality</b> 2:18</p> <p><b>question</b> 8:19 10:17</p> <p><b>questions</b> 3:6,17 5:13 9:25 10:2 12:6,8,9</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>R</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>R-H-O-N-D-A</b> 5:19</p> <p><b>raise</b> 6:9 10:8 11:2</p> <p><b>rate</b> 2:12 7:8 8:10 9:18 10:18 11:3, 24</p> <p><b>rates</b> 2:14,16</p> <p><b>read</b> 6:2</p> <p><b>reasonable</b> 2:17</p> <p><b>record</b> 2:4 4:11 5:18</p> <p><b>reference</b> 12:25</p> <p><b>Region</b> 10:18</p> <p><b>regulates</b> 2:14,17</p> <p><b>regulation</b> 2:25</p> <p><b>regulatory</b> 2:6</p>	<p><b>reinvest</b> 7:4</p> <p><b>remain</b> 3:6 5:12</p> <p><b>remarks</b> 3:11 4:8</p> <p><b>represent</b> 4:21</p> <p><b>representing</b> 4:10, 13</p> <p><b>reside</b> 10:13</p> <p><b>resources</b> 10:22</p> <p><b>rest</b> 10:19</p> <p><b>return</b> 7:12,15 11:19</p> <p><b>rhonda</b> 5:15,16,19 11:17</p> <p><b>ridiculous</b> 7:3</p> <p><b>ridiculously</b> 6:23</p> <p><b>role</b> 8:25</p> <p><b>room</b> 12:15</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>S</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>safety</b> 2:18</p> <p><b>scheduled</b> 3:9</p> <p><b>Scott</b> 4:20</p> <p><b>semi-curious</b> 11:13</p> <p><b>Senate</b> 2:21</p> <p><b>September</b> 2:4</p> <p><b>service</b> 2:7,18</p> <p><b>set</b> 2:9</p> <p><b>Seyer</b> 2:3,5 3:13 4:7 5:1,17,21 8:12,16,18 9:24 10:4,7,10,13,15 12:3,5,12</p> <p><b>shareholders</b> 7:9</p> <p><b>sheet</b> 5:3 12:14</p> <p><b>side</b> 12:23</p>
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<p><b>sign</b> 12:16</p> <p><b>sign-up</b> 5:3 12:14</p> <p><b>signed</b> 3:20 5:3</p> <p><b>Sikeston</b> 5:25 8:15,23 10:14</p> <p><b>small</b> 8:6</p> <p><b>sounds</b> 7:19</p> <p><b>south</b> 10:21</p> <p><b>Southwest</b> 10:18</p> <p><b>specialists</b> 2:24</p> <p><b>spell</b> 5:7,17</p> <p><b>Stacey</b> 4:20 12:11</p> <p><b>staff</b> 2:22 4:4,21</p> <p><b>started</b> 3:19</p> <p><b>state</b> 4:2,12 5:7 10:20,21</p> <p><b>stay</b> 8:4</p> <p><b>step</b> 5:5</p> <p><b>stockholders</b> 7:5 11:18</p> <p><b>Street</b> 4:22</p> <p><b>stuff</b> 6:6</p> <p><b>submit</b> 12:21,23</p> <p><b>sworn</b> 5:16 10:8,9</p>	<p><b>titled</b> 12:23</p> <p><b>today</b> 2:4 3:1,6,20, 25 4:10 5:2,4 8:21 9:14 10:8 12:18, 20</p> <p><b>today's</b> 4:5</p> <p><b>town</b> 11:10</p> <p><b>Tracy</b> 4:20</p> <p><b>traveled</b> 4:1</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>U</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>Uh-huh</b> 8:17</p> <p><b>unable</b> 12:19</p> <p><b>understood</b> 6:11</p> <p><b>utilities</b> 2:19 4:17</p> <p><b>utility</b> 2:24 4:14 9:7,10 11:11</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>V</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>voice</b> 6:22 8:1,10 9:18</p> <p><b>vote</b> 6:22 7:8</p>	<hr/> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Y</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>year</b> 7:20 11:3</p> <p><b>years</b> 11:10</p>	
<hr/> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>T</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>taking</b> 3:24</p> <p><b>talk</b> 7:25</p> <p><b>technology</b> 6:12</p> <p><b>testify</b> 3:20 12:16</p> <p><b>thing</b> 10:17</p> <p><b>thought</b> 9:6</p> <p><b>threshold</b> 11:12</p> <p><b>time</b> 2:5,9 3:10 11:4 12:1</p>	<hr/> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>W</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>wanted</b> 8:9</p> <p><b>web</b> 12:23</p> <p><b>website</b> 6:18 12:22</p> <p><b>wife</b> 11:8</p> <p><b>wintertime</b> 8:5</p> <p><b>wondered</b> 10:24</p> <p><b>work</b> 5:24 6:21</p> <p><b>worked</b> 8:22 11:9</p> <p><b>working</b> 11:8</p>		