

BEFORE THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION
STATE OF MISSOURI

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS
LOCAL PUBLIC HEARING

In the Matter of the Request)
of The Empire District)
Electric Company d/b/a)
Liberty for Authority to)
File Tariffs Increasing) File No. ER-2024-0261
Rates for Electric Service)
Provided to Customers In Its)
Missouri Service Area)

WEDNESDAY, July 23, 2025
12:00 p.m.

VOLUME V

City Council Chambers
110 West Maddux Street
Branson, Missouri

CHARLES HATCHER,
REGULATORY LAW JUDGE

KAYLA HAHN, CHAIR,
MAIDA J. COLEMAN,
GLEN KOLKMEYER,
JOHN MITCHELL

COMMISSIONERS

Reported by:

Colin Wallis, Lexitas Legal, St. Louis, MO 63101

* * * * *

(Starting time of the hearing: 1:32 p.m.)

REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Let's go on the record. Today is July 23rd, and the current time is 1:32 p.m. The question and answer portion of this afternoon's event -- excuse me, sirs, if we could all have a seat. We're beginning a hearing now. Thank you all.

The question and answer portion is over for this portion of our event. What will be happening now is the testimony before the Missouri Public Service Commission. The Missouri Public Service Commission has set this time aside for members of the public to comment about Liberty's requested rate increase, and that is in case number: ER-2024-0261.

My name is Charles Hatcher, and I'm the regulatory law judge that will be overseeing this hearing. The Commission regulates the rates charged by public utility companies in Missouri to ensure that the rates are just and reasonable. The Commission also regulates the quality of service and safety of the operations of the public utilities.

The Commission is made up of five

1 commissioners. We currently have one vacancy
2 at the moment. We have the Commissioners'
3 Chair Kayla Hahn, and also Commissioners Maida
4 Coleman, Glenn Kolkmeier and John Mitchell.
5 They're appointed by the governor and confirmed
6 by the Senate. With me today are the chair of
7 the Commission, Kayla Hahn, and online, we also
8 have Commissioners John Mitchell and
9 Commissioner Maida Coleman. Chair Hahn, would
10 you like make to make any opening remarks?

11 CHAIR HAHN: Good afternoon, everyone.
12 Just want to welcome you to our local public
13 hearing this afternoon. We know that the
14 afternoon hour can be challenging, and, so, we
15 do appreciate you making time to come out and
16 give us your comments. As part of the rate
17 case process, this is really an important part,
18 because it's really the part where we get to
19 hear directly from the public about their
20 thoughts on the case. And, so, we really value
21 that feedback. And, so, again, we'll just look
22 forward in hearing your comments and taking
23 those into consideration. Thank you.

24 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
25 Chair. Now, we'll move to the attorneys for

1 the parties and have them introduce them for
2 the record. First for the company, Ms. Carter?

3 MS. CARTER: Diana Carter for the Empire
4 District Electric Company, doing business as
5 Liberty.

6 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
7 and for Staff?

8 MS. HANSEN: Andrea Hansen, entering her
9 appearance for Staff Counsel's Office at the
10 Missouri Public Service Commission.

11 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
12 and also the Public Counsel.

13 MR. WILLIAMS: Nathan Williams, chief
14 deputy counsel, appearing on behalf of the
15 public and the Office of the Public Counsel.

16 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you.
17 This case also has a few intervening parties.
18 Are any of those parties here that would like
19 to introduce themselves for the record? Seeing
20 none, this is a very well attended hearing, as
21 have the previous hearings for the Commission,
22 and we do want to make sure that everyone has
23 an opportunity to speak, because the Commission
24 does want to hear all of your comments. For
25 that reason, I will be having a timer set and

1 limiting comments to three minutes each. That
2 is so that you can make sure that comment is
3 heard by the commissioners and your neighbors
4 have the time to make their comments. Many of
5 you did sign up with one of the sign-up sheets.
6 I'll go through that list. At the end of the
7 list of names, I'll then ask if there is anyone
8 in the audience who didn't sign up or testify
9 already who would then like to. So, if you
10 didn't sign up, that's not your only chance.

11 And, lastly, the Commission won't be able
12 to answer questions today. That's why we
13 specifically labeled that the question and
14 answer portion, and that was at the beginning.
15 This portion is taking testimony, so the
16 Commission wants to hear from you, you're
17 effectively providing a witness statement, but
18 we can't answer questions because the
19 Commission is still deciding this is case, so,
20 they won't be able to give their opinion until
21 they do in an official decision after all the
22 evidence is presented.

23 Lastly, before we start the testimony, I'm
24 going to -- to let you know about two shortcuts
25 I'm going to be making, and this is for saving

1 of time. I just mentioned to you that we're
2 trying to make sure that everyone has a chance
3 to speak, and we have found that, well,
4 swearing everyone individually adds about 30
5 seconds to each person's testimony. So, what
6 I'm going to do is I'm going to swear you all
7 in as a group, and then I'll just ask that you
8 confirm that when you come up and that will
9 save some time.

10 So, everyone that has signed up to be a
11 witness, please raise your right hand.

12 (Multiple people sworn.)

13 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
14 all. Then also what I'm going to do also to
15 save some time is I will be spelling your last
16 name. We have a court reporter, and I have
17 your names here listed. Just, to save a little
18 bit of time, I'm going to take my stab of
19 spelling your name, and ask if you confirm
20 that's true or not. And that's so our court
21 reporter when they make a transcript can
22 accurately have your names spelled.

23 So, with that, I'm going to start off with
24 our list. First of our list, we have
25 Representative Brian Seitz. Sorry, sir, come

1 on up. Thank you. Please confirm that you
2 are -- you are sworn in.

3 MR. SEITZ: Yes, I am sworn in, and for
4 the record, I am state representative Brian
5 Seitz.

6 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Last name
7 is spelled S-e-i-t-z; is that correct?

8 MR. SEITZ: Correct.

9 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you.
10 Please go ahead with your statement.

11 MR. SEITZ: Thank you very much. I think
12 we talked about this during the question and
13 answer period. The rate increase seemed to be
14 arbitrarily high, and no other industry do you
15 see an overnight rate increase of quite
16 probably 40 percent. I think that's going to
17 hurt not only residential homeowners but
18 business owners here in our tourist town.

19 Ticket rates are going to have go up.
20 Hotel rates are going to have to go up.
21 Restaurants are going to have raise their
22 rates. I worked at a large car wash for 21
23 years. If they're going to have pay upwards of
24 26 to 40 some percent in a rate increase, we're
25 going to have raise prices yet again.

1 I'll be running legislation in January to
2 give the consumers a choice in their utilities,
3 and change state statute regarding that manner.
4 Capitalism builds competition and leads to
5 lower prices. The co-ops need to be given as a
6 choice that consumers can make if they're going
7 to be arbitrary rate increases. Liberty is a
8 subsidiary of Algonquin Power and Utilities
9 Corporation. I've reached out to my good
10 friend, Congressman Eric Burlison, and I will
11 also contact Senator Eric Schmidt for help in
12 Washington to find out why a Canadian company
13 is so involved in power generation and
14 dispersion in the United States.

15 This is not in alignment with President
16 Trump's America First agenda. I spoke on the
17 house floor in reference to Senate Bill 4 and
18 voted no. Now, I understand that this rate
19 increase has nothing to do with Senate Bill 4,
20 but when the lobbyists were there visiting my
21 office, I said, okay, so rates are going to go
22 up because of Senate Bill 4 and future test
23 models and test costs. They said yes. I said,
24 okay, so we'll keep them at current rates right
25 now, because they're going to go up anyway due

1 to Senate Bill 4, and to a man and to a woman,
2 they answered honestly and said no. These rate
3 increases were already planned, and we'll find
4 further rate increases due to Senate Bill 4. I
5 think it's going to harm our local economy and
6 the residents of Branson, Missouri, cannot
7 afford the rate increases. I appreciate your
8 time.

9 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
10 Representative. Were there any questions?
11 Seeing none, I appreciate you being here this
12 afternoon. The next name, and I'm going to
13 call a few names at a time to go ahead and
14 start a line, so we can make sure and get to
15 your statements in a timely fashion. Dan
16 Nosalek, thank you it's spelled phonetically
17 for me. I appreciate that. Right after
18 Mr. Nosalek, will be Steve Czesher -- sorry
19 about that. I do apologize for my
20 mispronunciations. Mark Moore and then Scott
21 Novak. Mr. Nosalek is your last name spelled
22 N-o-s-a-l-e-l --

23 MR. NOSALEK: No sir, with a K on the end.

24 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
25 sir. I appreciate that. And please confirm

1 that you swore to tell the truth.

2 MR. NOSALEK: I was sworn in.

3 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you.
4 Please go ahead with your statement.

5 MR. NOSALEK: Okay. You threw me through
6 a little bit of a loop when you said three
7 minutes. I thought it was five, hopefully, at
8 least. But I appreciate everybody here, the
9 Board and especially the OPC members. For of
10 those who you don't know, this is our lawyer.
11 This is the one that fights our case for us
12 with PSC. So, that service I really
13 appreciate. The whole question here is the
14 integrity, the numbers, the calculations, that
15 are being given to us. They say 30 percent.
16 Wow, 30 percent for who? If you use over 15
17 kilowatts -- 1,500 per hour, if you use 500,
18 I'll let you guess who uses 500 kilowatts, it's
19 39 percent per hour.

20 How did these numbers come about? Why did
21 we bring those numbers? It's obvious, typical
22 business profile. PSC, you need to be looking
23 at this. They're going to give the best case
24 scenario for them. We're looking at 39 percent
25 for those who can least afford it. Now, then I

1 got to get off my notes because I'll never make
2 three minutes.

3 What really bothers me and bothers OPC
4 from everything I can find, and their sworn
5 testimony before the Board, is that the
6 original filing for the rate request was last
7 November. That rate request was for 92
8 million. I may be off a little bit, but
9 \$92 million. Thank goodness, OPC comes in,
10 looks at their requests, it's not right.
11 They're counting things they should not be
12 counting. Best of my recollection and based a
13 lot of it was full costs. So, immediately,
14 they jump in; refile a second time. The second
15 time they file for a \$158 million, \$60 million
16 more than the original request.

17 Now, the way I understand it, and this all
18 comes from the PSC webpage, their documents,
19 their testimonies, the way I understand it,
20 they made this change by a method that is
21 normally used for typo errors, small number
22 errors, not for massive changes. It was snuck
23 in. The whole thing should have been kicked
24 out and reprocessed from day one, so we had a
25 full opportunity to have the time allotted to

1 attack this situation looking to the data. I
2 feel certain that I presented that correctly.
3 If I didn't, I welcome to be challenged on it.
4 But the whole thing amounts to profits. How
5 much money can we make.

6 Presently -- just recently the state has
7 passed legislation that they can now collect
8 fees to pay for new projects. Now think about
9 that. How would you like to be a businessman,
10 I can make my customers pay for my new building
11 and I don't have to go out and get a loan or
12 pay interest on it?

13 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Sir?

14 MR. NOSALEK: Yes, sir?

15 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Your time
16 has expired. If you could finish your thought.

17 MR. NOSALEK: Okay. Folks, everyone's
18 done a good job today; I appreciate it. I
19 appreciate the commissioners, and everybody
20 that are here today and the state
21 representatives. The thing we need to do is
22 get after the commissioners, get after the
23 mayors, get after any politician you can. We
24 need to stop this.

25 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,

1 sir, I appreciate you coming out this
2 afternoon. Steve Czersher (ph)? No, alright.
3 We'll circle back. Mark Moore? Mr. Moore,
4 first, is your last name spelled M-o-o-r-e?

5 MR. MOORE: That is correct, sir.

6 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
7 and did you confirm that you would be
8 testifying truthfully?

9 MR. MOORE: I did.

10 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you.
11 Please, I'll set the timer and please go ahead.

12 MR. MOORE: Thank you. And I'd like to
13 come at this from a different, and I'm going to
14 go back to what this gentleman on the end,
15 legal counsel, said, a word that he used was
16 Enron. So, I'm going to circle back. So, if
17 folks would take a look at how market makers
18 set prices, and this is a commodity that we're
19 dealing with. A 40 percent increase in a
20 commodity. Whether it's corn, but this is
21 electricity.

22 The market makers, if they can get the
23 price that they can get the market to do, the
24 retail customer, jack up a price of a stock,
25 whatever, that's the price that's going to be

1 paid. If the company can get the retail
2 electric bills higher, that is what's going to
3 be -- that's what going to make the market in
4 the futures. So, they'll be able to get that
5 price, it's a higher price, we pay the price
6 through our wallets, which is understandable.
7 But that's how market makers set it. Now,
8 you've got several market makers in this
9 country, and one of them is PJM. Now, they
10 just had an auction. They had a low cap and
11 high cap on the megawatts. They do daily
12 auctions. The low price was \$269. \$269 per a
13 megawatt. It all went out at \$329 a megawatt.

14 So, that's shows you, if these market
15 makers can get the public to say, oh, we lost,
16 it's okay, that sets precedents for the prices
17 that's going to be paid in the future. Now,
18 this is -- the PJM market maker, they call
19 themselves, they're actually called PJM
20 Interconnection, right? Transmission grid
21 operators, but they're just really market
22 makers, just like ICE or the NYMEX where all
23 the futures are traded. So, if we allow the
24 increases, that sets higher prices; that sets
25 the demand because PJM is an east coast market

1 maker. That's where all the AI data centers
2 are going.

3 So, that means the increased price that
4 we're paying, now the data centers have to pay
5 that big price, too, because they're still
6 going to pay the retail price as it is, but as
7 our prices go up across the country on an
8 average, they're going to go to those data
9 centers, crypto centers or whatever else, and
10 we set precedents for that for allowing that.
11 And I just want the Commission to look at it
12 that way. I mean, we've got Enron 2.0 coming
13 up, because a lot of your generators are the
14 ones powering the country; but it's the market
15 makers that set the price and demand.

16 So, you've got them, Enron is still out
17 there, they just called them a little different
18 name. That's all. I'd like the Commission to
19 look at it in that direction if they would.
20 Thank you.

21 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Good
22 timing. Thank you very much, Mr. Moore. I
23 appreciate you being here this afternoon.
24 Scott Novak. The next few names are going to
25 be Richard McIntosh, Mike Czyzewski and Jerry

1 Buckley. I'm sorry, Mark. I was smiling
2 because Mike Krzyzewski is the retired coach of
3 Duke Basketball Program. Okay, thank you,
4 Mr. Novak, is your last name spelled,
5 N-o-v-a-k?

6 MR. NOVAK: Yes.

7 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Did you
8 swear that your testimony would be truthful?

9 MR. NOVAK: Absolutely.

10 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
11 I'll set the timer. Please go ahead with your
12 statement.

13 MR. NOVAK: I want to tie this, I'm also
14 an alderman for the City of Forsyth. I have
15 several businesses in Forsyth. I want to plead
16 on the behalf -- we had to raise our water
17 increase. Some of it because of increases such
18 as utilities and everything else, and it really
19 hurt our people from businesses to everything.

20 Now, I'm hearing there was exactly two
21 rate increases in that one, so this increase is
22 probably going to be about 50 percent at least,
23 if one is 42, I'm sure the first rate's going
24 to be at least ten, so we're at about a
25 50 percent increase probably. The second you

1 guys do this, I'm going to have to raise water
2 rates for my citizens. And because all the
3 other costs associated when you guys allow
4 this -- if this increase is allowed, it's going
5 to tag on all the other incidental costs from
6 everybody else that have to bump up theirs, so
7 I'm going to turn around and hammer the
8 citizens of the Forsyth on their water bill
9 considerably again.

10 People have talked -- I have a laundry
11 mat. That laundry mater are (sic) usually used
12 by people that can't afford to have their own
13 washer and dryer or have such a family that is
14 more practical to go in there to do several
15 loads, instead of one at a time. This, just
16 this, just the 45 increase they're presenting,
17 the 40-plus increase that they're presenting is
18 going to cost me the -- my utility -- my
19 utility bill runs from 800 to \$900. It's going
20 to go up to 12. I'm going to pass those
21 directly on. All of this is going to have to
22 be passed on to everybody. So, when you're
23 talking about a citizen of Forsyth getting a
24 rate increase under their power of 45 percent,
25 I'm going to have to add that increase to their

1 water, and, so, it just magnifies and it's
2 just -- I mean, and then everybody is talking
3 White River. White River is a co-op. I
4 understand that, but wherever they're doing,
5 they're producing it a lot cheaper, and they're
6 also giving back to the community.

7 Liberty doesn't give back that I know of.
8 I mean, there's grants. They're giving grants
9 to the teachers, they're giving -- we got \$500
10 as a city towards a Christmas tree from White
11 River. They're constantly giving back. They
12 have area fundraiser events that they give back
13 to the community. I don't see nothing from
14 Liberty, never have.

15 And salaries are just preposterous at
16 Algonquin. You know, President of the United
17 States makes what, 300, \$400,000. There's --
18 there's several people making multiple million
19 dollars and not doing a very -- they're not
20 running the business very well. Also, they
21 keep a debt load. They'd rather pay their
22 people dividends and keep their debt high, and
23 why they do that is that they can use this to
24 plead to the Commission that, hey, we have this
25 debt; we need to increase, instead of paying

1 off their debt? Is that my timer?

2 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: It is.

3 Please go ahead and finish your thought,
4 though.

5 MR. NOVAK: Well, just basically saying,
6 you know, it's just -- it's just a past on --
7 they're not managing it well, and they're not
8 paying off their debt, so they can leave it,
9 look, that they're in more dire need than they
10 actually are; they'd rather make their money.
11 No one's -- you know, if I don't run my
12 business right, I take a loss. Ain't none of
13 them at Algonquin talking a loss. They just
14 pass it on to us, and give it as an increase.
15 Thank you for your time.

16 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
17 Mr. Novak. I appreciate you being here today.
18 Richard McIntosh. Mark Czyzewski. Is it is
19 Czyzewski. It is not. I apologize.

20 MR. CZYZEWSKI: Close enough, close
21 enough. C-z-y-z-e-w-s-k-i.

22 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank
23 whoever that was in the audience helping out
24 with that. And just to confirm, you did -- you
25 did take the oath that your testimony would be

1 truthful?

2 MR. CZYZEWSKI: Affirmative.

3 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you.
4 Please go ahead; I'll set your timer.

5 MR. CZYZEWSKI: Short and sweet. I
6 listened to the questions and answers earlier,
7 and it's -- I see -- this argument going back
8 and forward. I don't think there's any really
9 set, you know, standard of what people think is
10 acceptable, but I do one thing: I like -- I
11 like competition and having a for-profit
12 electrical company I don't think it is
13 beneficial to this area.

14 I'm -- I used to live in Arkansas, and we
15 have a co-op there and there's a co-op here,
16 and even in Springfield, they own their
17 electric company and their rates, I thought,
18 unbelievable. They were really good. But we,
19 for some reason, have a for-profit
20 organization. And I don't believe it's good
21 for this community. I don't think it's good
22 for Arkansas, and I -- my suggestion is to
23 leave -- to go to have other options for the
24 people, and I would like some advice on how we
25 petition that to happen to the Commission.

1 Thank you.

2 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you.

3 I appreciate you being here this afternoon.

4 Jerry Buckley. The next few names are Gail

5 Myer, Ken Schortmann and Dennis Mobley.

6 Mr. Buckley, is your last name spelled

7 B-u-c-k-l-e-y.

8 MR. BUCKLEY: Yes.

9 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: And just to
10 confirm, you did agree that your testimony
11 would be truthful?

12 MR. BUCKLEY: I did.

13 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you.
14 I'll set your timer. Please go ahead with your
15 comments.

16 MR. BUCKLEY: Okay, most of my major
17 questions were answered in the question and
18 answer -- what I'd like to do is support the
19 staff's recommendation for the large load
20 customer service tariff. I used to work for a
21 company that had a demand charge, because we
22 had, you know, 10,000 a month electrical bills,
23 so I understand how that works in our passage.
24 I'd also like to voice that I am not a DEI-ESG
25 agreeing person, and I know that Algonquin

1 is -- that's a very big part of their process,
2 and so I'd like to recommend whatever cost to
3 run those programs can be shared back to the
4 dividend owners, then the dividend owners can
5 decide if they like that policy or not.

6 And after I did a little homework, these
7 companies are abandoning the DEI process, and
8 that would include Lowe's, Walmart, Ford,
9 McDonald's, Amazon, Disney, Meta, Target,
10 Google, Pepsi Co. and some others, so that's
11 just a little cost thing that if the company
12 wanted to run with that, they could pay for it
13 with dividends, and the dividend holders can
14 decide, you know, if that needs to be carried
15 on.

16 I also want to say I've been here 12
17 years. We all seen some pretty heavy storms
18 here. As you all have, probably, most likely,
19 if you live in Southwest Missouri. I went
20 through Joplin the day it went away, and I
21 moved here on that day. And, so, Liberty staff
22 and line crews are incredible. They're
23 excellent to work with. They act like family
24 in the storm. They're not telling you to get
25 out of the way. They're working with you as a

1 team member. And when I work with the people
2 at the service desk where customer service,
3 they're incredible to work with you, you know,
4 and the nice thing is they're people I can
5 understand. My hearing isn't that well, and I
6 need clarity and some companies have people
7 that I can't understand, and, so, that's a big
8 help. And the bottom line to run with this
9 whole thing is 39 percent. I just can't do it.
10 Thank you.

11 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
12 Mr. Buckley. Appreciate you being here. Gail
13 Myer. Mr. Myer, is your last spelled M-y-e-r.

14 MR. MYER: It is, and I'll tell the truth.

15 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you.
16 I'll set the timer, and please go ahead and
17 give us your comments.

18 MR. MYER: So, my family is in business in
19 this community, has been for long time. The
20 increase, and I have a degree in chemical and
21 petroleum refining engineering, if you can
22 believe that, but the increase for us is six
23 figures. So, we take this very seriously.
24 It's one of our four largest costs. So, I have
25 some choices. I can even pass that on to the

1 customer. I can eat it, or I can try to cut my
2 costs. And sometimes cutting costs basically
3 amounts to labor. And, so, you know, when I
4 look at this, and you see this increase, and
5 I've heard 30; I've 39; I've heard 50; there's
6 probably a right answer there; but it indicates
7 there's a problem.

8 And, you know, whether that's leadership
9 of the company, whether there's poor planning,
10 you know, it's outside sources. There's a
11 problem. And, you know, I understand this is
12 cost recovery, and I also understand there's a
13 return on equity. I saw the return of equity
14 at nine and a half percent. I think that's
15 aggressive. That would be above the loan rate.
16 It would be above any CD rate, and, in fact,
17 these senior citizens who I really feel for,
18 they could buy stock and get a better return
19 than the CD in the bank, right? And I think
20 you got to look at that. Also, locally, I
21 don't think the problem is locally. Our folks
22 locally are admired for hospitality and
23 service, but I think we have to remember that
24 they just do what they're told to do.

25 And this is the same company who gave

1 incentives to folks to reduce electricity based
2 on a court case; and I always wondered how that
3 made any sense to resist that, because if you
4 give those incentives and people cut their
5 electricity, they don't have to put the
6 money -- or they can push the capital back down
7 the road; and I think that needs to be a
8 reminder to Liberty.

9 But, in general, I would -- I think it's
10 probably embarrassing to Liberty, and to this
11 community, to say we needed somewhere between a
12 30 and 50 percent rate increase. I think the
13 Office of Public Counsel probably came the
14 closest to where we should be. I ask the
15 Public Service Commission to be harsh. I think
16 they need a wake-up call, to harsh in this
17 issue. And I also don't like the concept of
18 utilities coming and asking for the moon and
19 expecting for part of Montana. You know, my
20 answer to that is give them a small part of
21 Montana. Thank you.

22 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
23 Mr. Myer. I appreciate you being here this
24 afternoon. N. Schortmann. And,
25 Mr. Schortmann, let me spell your name. Is it

1 spelled S-c-h-o-r-t-m-a-n-n.

2 MR. SCHORTMANN: Yes, that's pretty close.

3 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you.

4 And did you -- thank you, I appreciate it.

5 I'll set your timer. Please go ahead with your
6 communities.

7 MR. SCHORTMANN: Okay. I'm here as a
8 retired person and a lot of people who are
9 retired. I have been to a lot of different
10 places in this country because I served 23
11 years in the military. And every place I've
12 gone, they do these electrical rate things kind
13 of like they're doing here, but not like this.
14 I've never seen anything like this. 30 percent
15 for me and my wife on retired pay to pay that
16 much more. It's kind of a little out of whack
17 with reality towards the people who worked
18 their whole life, supported this country,
19 supported everything else to pay that kind of
20 increase.

21 Now, as a part of that, I have my own
22 business when I retired from the military, and
23 it's unbelievable what I did: I used a lot of
24 electricity because I had hatchers and
25 incubators to attach quail, thousands. But

1 when the electrical rates went up, it didn't
2 hit me near that. The other thing I have to
3 say is that it gets a little political, but
4 this company actually being from Canada, and
5 Canada and the USA having a little scrape,
6 there might be another reason to this, they
7 want more money because maybe tariffs. So,
8 think about that one.

9 I also put this out that my wife and I,
10 every night, shut everything off. We don't
11 have TVs running, VCRs, we don't have all that
12 running. All we have running is, well, you got
13 to leave the plug plugged in the refrigerator.
14 All the lights and everything go off, and they
15 are supposed to be have, what they call, a --
16 what they do they call that? Off-hour -- huh?
17 Yeah, so there's supposed to -- you get a
18 little money back.

19 So, what do I get every month for turning
20 everything off, less than 50 cents. I think
21 that is -- is crazy. So, we don't run
22 anything. We're supposed to get a little
23 cutback for being reduced the power, and we
24 don't get nothing but 50 cents. That's just to
25 me is bad. Retired people can't afford this.

1 I have an income but it's fixed. Other
2 folks have less income than what I do, and
3 they're really fixed. So, raising this kind of
4 thing on people like that, that work their
5 whole life and now are going to pay this kind
6 of increase to a company run out of this
7 country is bad. Thank you.

8 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Mr.
9 Schortmann, thank you for your service, and
10 thank you for being here today. Next, on our
11 list, Dennis Mobley. And after that will be
12 Karen Best and this is -- where is Forrest? I
13 can't see him. Oh, then you'll be up next
14 Forrest for our assistance. I'm sorry, let me
15 get back to Mr. Mobley. Is your last name
16 spelled M-o-b-l-e-y?

17 MR. MOBLEY: It is.

18 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Did you
19 confirm that you will be telling the truth in
20 your testimony?

21 MR. MOBLEY: Yes, sir.

22 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you.
23 I'll the start timer. Please go ahead with
24 your comments.

25 MR. MOBLEY: Okay, it is my opinion that

1 Liberty needs upgrades to their hearts more
2 than their systems, okay. They said they want
3 to make service more reliable, and to be able
4 to generate more electricity. I've been living
5 in the area for years now, and the service has
6 always been reliable. They say they want the
7 ability to generate more electricity, but how
8 much is enough? How much money are they going
9 to trying to milk us for to say that they've
10 got enough? The service works, okay.

11 If there's a legitimate need for
12 electricity, than that demand, itself, should
13 be generating extra income -- extra revenue.
14 It's just -- I do not like these people.
15 Instead of being responsible for managing the
16 revenue the way other growing businesses do,
17 they just want to squeeze existing customers
18 for 30 percent more money. Just -- well.

19 Before Liberty ever became involved
20 locally, my experience, like I say, reliable,
21 dependable, electrical services, so for more
22 reasons on so many levels, I don't buy any of
23 their rationale, their reasoning. It's just --
24 oh, well. Even in times of high demand like
25 extreme low temperatures, and winter storms

1 where people have more space heaters going, we
2 still had enough electricity to meet the
3 demands, so why are they pushing this as a
4 justification for their rate -- to raise the
5 rates?

6 The reason for trying to justify this
7 absurd rate increasing seemed very
8 questionable. They are to me anyway, and,
9 obviously, to many others, okay. Even if their
10 supposed goals were legit, why would it have to
11 be an ongoing degree -- to the degree to which
12 they're asking for it, why does it have to be
13 ongoing, okay. I'm sorry. I'm trying to go
14 fast, I'm sorry.

15 Okay, if, and I highly question the
16 legitimacy of their intentions, but if they
17 change some things for high reliability and
18 output, why would that need an extra 152.8
19 million every year going forward. Once any new
20 equipment is in place and functioning, why keep
21 squeezing people indefinitely, as they intend?
22 When most businesses want to upgrade, they have
23 a financial responsibility to pay for upgrades
24 out of previous profits. Liberty is doing very
25 well financially, so why they can't invest out

1 of a portion of their profits?

2 Liberty wants to act like any changes must
3 come out of getting more money of their
4 existing customers, so they want to raise
5 prices first. Will they petition to lower
6 prices after any new equipment is paid for?
7 Are they going to do the same thing so they can
8 reduces rates? I don't think so.

9 Okay. Since Liberty is doing just fine;
10 they're making lots of money. Investors are
11 making lots of money. They have good equipment
12 and no problem making payroll. Why do they
13 make things even harder for customers who
14 already have trouble paying bills and putting
15 food on the table. People are having a hard
16 time with living expenses already, and Liberty
17 wants to make it worse. If this questionable
18 increase is granted, what will the ripple
19 effect of this rate increase be? Well, you've
20 heard it. You've already heard what it's going
21 to cost. Moving on.

22 To sum it up, Liberty's request for an
23 extra 152.8 million per year is not justified
24 by facts and reality. If updates to the system
25 are needed, then those upgrades should come out

1 of existing profits of which there are plenty
2 not putting additional stress on existing
3 struggling customers. Again, Liberty needs to
4 upgrade their hearts more than their systems,
5 and I beg you people please stop their greed.
6 Please. Thank you.

7 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
8 Mr. Mobley. I appreciate you being here this
9 afternoon. Next is Karen Best. Ms. Best, this
10 is an easy last name --

11 MS. BEST: Hope so.

12 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Common
13 spelling, B-e-s-t.

14 MS. BEST: Correct.

15 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you.
16 Did you confirm to --

17 MS. BEST: Yes.

18 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: -- tell the
19 truth? I'll start your timer. Please go
20 ahead.

21 MS. BEST: Okay, thank you. First of all,
22 I served as mayor of Branson for two terms, so
23 I worked very closely with Liberty Utilities
24 and our community, and I would like to say they
25 are amazing. They are the fabric of our

1 community. We love them. Any time we had an
2 issue, we would call, but I will also tell
3 every time there was a rate hike or any
4 problems, I got a lot of phone calls about the
5 issues with the rate hikes, and that was when
6 the rate hikes were really low.

7 I can't imagine how Mayor Milton's phone
8 is going to be if the price goes that you're
9 suggesting. For the last 19 years, I've been a
10 real estate agent as well, and I work with a
11 lot of developers, and I'm currently working on
12 a \$70 million project in the City of Branson
13 right now, and I can't tell you what effect
14 that's going on have on these developers as
15 they're coming in and that rate hike going so
16 high. I'm telling you they're watching this
17 very carefully as they're in town right now
18 this week looking at this.

19 And, so, a 30 percent, 35 percent,
20 39 percent, whatever that magic number is, is
21 really high. I can look across this audience,
22 and I bet if I asked anybody how many of you
23 have gotten a raise in the past year of
24 30 percent or more, I don't think there's
25 probably going to be many hands go up. And,

1 so, you're dealing in an economy where it's
2 really hard. It's hard for people to afford a
3 home. And when you're going into this home
4 and, now, you have this huge rate increase,
5 it's going to make to it impossible for
6 homeowners as they go along. And, so, the one
7 thing I would ask you to consider is, when
8 people feel they're getting the value for what
9 you're asking for, this room would be empty if
10 everybody felt that this value was there.

11 You heard a lot of comments about billing
12 issues, customer service. I'm going to give
13 you just one quick example. I had a customer
14 that was selling their condo, and we called to
15 get the changes made from the solar to the
16 buyer and electric. We give them the account
17 number, the meter number, and this is the 800
18 number, this is not local. They wanted us to
19 go and to climb down a gully to go verify that
20 that was the correct meter number. I'm like
21 you're the one who has been billing this person
22 for five years at this meter number and this
23 account number, and you don't trust your own
24 system?

25 I know they purchased a new customer

1 service system. And that was done pretty
2 recently. I also know that system has not been
3 effective, and you've heard it over and over at
4 the different things. So, now, they're talking
5 about abandoning that system. Now, we as the
6 rate people in the community, they're asking us
7 to absorb their decision to go with a faulty
8 system. I don't think that should be passed on
9 to us.

10 I would ask the Commission, respectfully,
11 to look at a lower number, something that's
12 going to be easier for our community. We have
13 a lot of senior citizens. Maybe that's a two
14 percent. Maybe that's a three percent; and
15 somebody said 0 percent until all of these
16 issues are fixed. We're just asking for you to
17 be fair. What you would want to pay if you
18 were living in this community? Thank you.

19 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
20 Ms. Best. And, Forrest, please help me out.
21 Our next witness is Janet Machen, and
22 Ms. Machen is your last name spelled
23 M-a-c-h-e-n?

24 MS. MACHEN: It is, and it's pronounced
25 Machen.

1 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
2 and I apologize. Ms. Machen, did you confirm
3 you would be telling the truth during your
4 testimony?

5 MS. MACHEN: Absolutely.

6 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you.
7 Let me start your timer, and please go ahead
8 with your comments.

9 MS. MACHEN: I would like to say that my
10 landlord checked in on me and found my
11 temperature at inside my apartment at
12 94 degrees. Now, he wasn't really happy about
13 that, but I am in a fixed income and I have to
14 choose between my utilities and whether or not
15 I have food.

16 Now, I've already cut my food budget back
17 to one meal a day, plus one snack just to keep
18 me from being hungry and eating the wrong
19 foods, because I'm educated enough to know what
20 a balanced meal is. And I'm not happy with my
21 utility company, have not been happy with it
22 for a long time. And if I could choose without
23 being -- like, I'm being -- I feel like I'm
24 being extorted, being forced to pay an
25 extortion in order keep my utilities on.

1 Now, my landlord is not going to let me
2 live in my apartment if I don't have utilities.
3 Now, I'm down to turning the breaker off on my
4 refrigerator. Now, what would you have me do?
5 I have a right to life just as you do or
6 anybody in this room. And I feel like that I'm
7 going to be forced out on the street. And
8 possibly suffer from heat exhaustion, a heat
9 stoke or even death.

10 I have grandchildren that I love, and they
11 should have a right to know their grandmother.
12 And this company, put me in a company that pays
13 all of my expenses, allows me to charge people
14 for not being my customer, and I'd be a
15 millionaire, too, and I can't help be angry
16 over what's being done to me. This is the 21st
17 century people. Electricity was not just now
18 invented. Thank you.

19 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
20 ma'am. I hear your frustration. I appreciate
21 you being here today. The next name I have on
22 the list is David Cushman. Evelyn Schluder. I
23 might have that name incorrect. Glenn Schulz.
24 Mr. Cushman, is your last name spelled
25 C-u-s-h-m-a-n?

1 MR. CUSHMAN: It is, and I was sworn in.

2 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
3 sir, I'll start --

4 MR. CUSHMAN: I don't even know how to
5 follow that. God bless you, ma'am. Chairman
6 Hahn, Office of Public Counsel, I agree with
7 your comment earlier today that there were a
8 lot of comments in the room that should have
9 been on the record for the Public Service
10 Commission. And I would just ask that the
11 Commission consider a hearing format change, so
12 all those people that thought they were being
13 heard today, would actually be heard. Because
14 they weren't, and it's not on the record.

15 So, I'm going to have some rhetorical
16 questions. I know that right now, because
17 there's no answers coming back. But why are we
18 even here today? Why would the Public Service
19 Commission, all due to respect, why would the
20 Public Service Commission Staff allow this
21 proposal to waste our time because that's what
22 it is. It's a cost of human capital.
23 Everybody sitting in here, giving up their time
24 so they can put up with this. It's crazy.

25 We've heard about the billing issues, the

1 system issues. Again, cost of human capital.
2 I set in here for another three hours, okay, so
3 we can complain about the billing system, okay.
4 I brought my records, again, today, Chairman
5 Hahn, I'm going to hand them to you if I could.
6 I've actually introduced these to the Public --
7 or the Office of the Public Counsel through
8 Jeff Marke, and, you know, we -- I had -- I
9 have approximately 25 meters that I'm
10 responsible for.

11 Just one of those meters will be affected
12 in five digits, five figures, with this
13 increase. In 2024, because of the billing
14 issue, we were charged 44 percent more than we
15 were ever before. I've got 20 years worth of
16 monthly records. It's back in line this year,
17 okay. So, tell me -- explain to me, Liberty,
18 how that happened? You can't. Over \$40,000 in
19 extra charges just on one meter.

20 One of the review standards of the Public
21 Service Commission when they audit Liberty to
22 verify that they even deserve an increase?
23 Rhetorical, I get it. What's the capital been
24 spent on that that deserves this increase?
25 Hopefully, it wasn't that -- wasn't that

1 billing system, okay?

2 Final thoughts, the impacts of this, it's
3 criminal. You just heard this lady, it's
4 correct, what you -- what's being asked for
5 here from this company. It will affect
6 tourism. It affects fixed residents, and it
7 will affect every commercial entity in this
8 community. Will you accept my records?

9 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: I will,
10 Mr. Cushman.

11 MR. CUSHMAN: Okay.

12 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
13 sir, I appreciate --

14 MR. CUSHMAN: I would just ask one thing.
15 Please deny this request.

16 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
17 sir. The next name we have is Evelyn
18 Schlinder? Okay, we'll circle back. Glenn
19 Schultz. All right. Mr. Schultz, is your last
20 name spelled S-c-h-u-l-z?

21 MR. SCHULZ: Yes, it is, and I was sworn
22 in.

23 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you.
24 I'll start your time. Please go ahead and
25 share your comments.

1 MR. SCHULZ: Thank you. I'm an alderman
2 here at Branson, and feel compelled to
3 represent constituency on this issue. I spent
4 many years in the boardroom listening to
5 division managers come in and talk about price
6 increases, cost increases and so on, and if a
7 product manager came in and said I need a
8 40 percent price increase, I'd start asking
9 what are the comparables? Show me what else in
10 the marketplace demands this. How are we
11 stacking up against our competition?

12 From 2023, their last rate increase, to
13 2025, we've experienced as a country less than
14 6 percent compounded inflation during that
15 time. If I look at a comparable utility in the
16 same marketplace with the same sparse
17 demographics that Liberty Electric has, if I
18 look at White River, a co-op, they just
19 announced a rate increase. Their first rate
20 increase since 2017 to 2025 that just went into
21 effect is 6.1 percent. While I value what
22 Liberty Electric does, I can assure you as a
23 former White River customer, that that utility
24 provides excellent service as well.

25 I had no experience with electricity going

1 out. I had no experience with problems
2 expanding my power infrastructure through that
3 utility. White River also said that their cost
4 of electricity this year as a co-op is going up
5 8 percent. It's hard to reconcile that
6 8 percent that they're experiencing against a
7 near 40 percent increase that's being asked of
8 us.

9 If I look at the billing errors that
10 Liberty has, I'd say that product manager, that
11 division manager, would have been fired. And I
12 think Liberty, while it's an unfortunate set of
13 errors, it is so gross that the Commission
14 should essentially punish Liberty for the pain
15 that they put the residents through with their
16 signature billing errors. You've heard from my
17 residents who have cataloged their errors; many
18 don't even realize they even had errors and
19 happily paid them. And Liberty should be
20 punished.

21 Finally, I ask you to consider the Taney
22 County partnership survey that was done in
23 2023. This is a government-private partnership
24 for economic growth in the area. And that
25 survey in 2023, 79 percent of the

1 residents responding were less than \$100,000 of
2 income in our community. 23 percent of those
3 residents were less than \$50,000 in income.
4 Consider this type of proposed increase against
5 that type of income. Thank you.

6 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
7 sir. I appreciate you coming out this
8 afternoon. And we are doing good. We are
9 about a third of the way through the witness
10 list. So, we will keep going. Brent Carroll.
11 Joy Trussell. Brent Carroll? Okay, we'll
12 circle back. Joy Trussell? Thank you,
13 Ms. Trussell, as you make your way to the
14 stand, is your last name spelled
15 T-r-u-s-s-e-l-l?

16 MS. TRUSSELL: Correct.

17 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: And thank
18 you. Did you confirm you'd be testifying
19 truthfully?

20 MS. TRUSSELL: Yes.

21 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you.
22 I'll set your time. Please go ahead.

23 MS. TRUSSELL: Back when the electricity
24 company was called Empire Electric, we had no
25 problem. We knew the rates would go up a

1 little bit now and then, probably yearly. We
2 understood that. The problem came when --

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Can you speak into
4 the mic, please?

5 MS. TRUSSELL: The problem came when it
6 went from Empire to Liberty. First raise, we
7 understand the fact the name changed, okay, we
8 can deal with that. But last year, in
9 particular, I was actually -- we were charged
10 seven bills in January, all different numbers,
11 all different account -- not under different
12 accounts. Same account, all different numbers,
13 all different price ranges. Went okay for the
14 second year that particular year, and we
15 were -- on behalf of our -- on behalf of us,
16 Liberty accepted \$318 for, I was of the
17 understanding, for winter bills.

18 But they didn't go to winter bills. It
19 went to summer bills that we were told their
20 computer system was blacked out, I guess. In
21 order to take care of that problem, I had to
22 come up with \$390, which is small compared to
23 what's out here. But it's huge for me and
24 mine. That \$390 ended up on a credit card, the
25 credit card I'm supposed to pay down. It's

1 taken me years to pay it down 7,000, because it
2 was 15,000. Now, it's creeping back up there
3 again.

4 It's part of life. I understand that. I
5 don't like it, and I'm getting upset about
6 what's going on. I have sent paperwork to two
7 members of this Missouri Public Service
8 Commission. I received a letter from them
9 saying, basically, that they're looking into
10 it; it's going to take about 30 days. In the
11 meantime, if you are able to go to the meeting,
12 go to it, please. You need to be heard. I'm
13 not a speaker. I'm just a person living on a
14 Social Security income. My husband has Social
15 Security income. He also has COPD. He needs
16 his electricity for his oxygen. That's all to
17 it. We only have put in what is absolutely
18 necessary, stove, refrigerator, microwave.

19 Yes, we do have two TVs. One is in the
20 living room, and it's on when we're in there.
21 The other one's in the bedroom. It's on for
22 me. I need the night light. I turn it down,
23 but I need the night light to be able to move
24 around and not trip over his oxygen cord.

25 Come on, folks. This is not right. I

1 don't -- I don't know how to fix it. There's
2 other people who can explain it better than I
3 can. But what's going on is not right. I've
4 got -- I've got a truck that needs power
5 steering fixing. A neighbor of mine was nice
6 enough to say, yeah, I can fix it. He fixed
7 it. But it's still really hard to steer. The
8 power is not always there. I'm afraid to use
9 it and I need my truck. If I need to move,
10 which is getting real close to it now, I don't
11 even have a vehicle to move with now.

12 Folks, this is not right. I live in a
13 two-bedroom trailer house. Our temperature in
14 the house is, like the lady said here, it's
15 high. We keep the thermostat on 77. The last
16 few days, it's been 75. He needs it a little
17 cooler than that in order to breathe, in order
18 to use the oxygen to breathe right. Come on,
19 folks. You're playing with life and death
20 here. Thank you. Thank you for allowing me to
21 speak.

22 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
23 Ms. Trussell. I appreciate you being here
24 today. Next name, we have is Becky Penron
25 (ph.) All right, and then we have Mike Evans,

1 followed by Bill Merck. And Marilyn Call.

2 Mr. Evans?

3 MR. EVANS: E-v-a-n-s, and, yes, I did.

4 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you.

5 I appreciate both of those statements. I'll
6 set your timer. Please go ahead with your
7 comments.

8 MR. EVANS: Okay. What -- it's a shame
9 that the Commission didn't get to hear a lot of
10 the people that were here in the first part of
11 this, because there were some very, very
12 knowledgeable statements made. Such credible
13 statements made, and it's a shame that you're
14 not going to get to hear it, because this room
15 is about one-third as full as it was during the
16 Q&A. But I was just taking notes on a lot of
17 them, but the increase, 30, 50, you know,
18 number 1, we just went through huge increases
19 in inflation.

20 People can't even afford their food
21 anymore hardly. It's funny because this year
22 I'm 70 years old. I live in a senior community
23 here in Branson. So, the point being is, I
24 hear from my neighbors all the time as senior
25 citizens, the food cost didn't go down with the

1 20-something percent inflation that went
2 through the four years of Mr. Biden. We got a
3 little bit of inflation increase here under our
4 new president Mr. Trump. It was like, I think,
5 it was two or three, I'm not sure, but it was
6 very low; and see -- but really, it's -- let's
7 just say under Biden it was 25 percent. Well,
8 it's 28 percent. It doesn't ever go down.
9 It's just continues on the upward spiral.

10 And this year, Social Security is little
11 over 2 percent increase in your Social Security
12 checks. And living in a senior community, as
13 the president of my POA, my conscientious move
14 that I do with my community is you think of the
15 person that can't afford to live there the
16 most. That's number 1. And if there's one
17 person, that's my number 1 factor into
18 increasing the monthly assessment to live
19 there.

20 I'm going to be very conscientious of
21 that. This company hasn't been conscientious.
22 Everything I heard today, and you all missed it
23 all, you missed a lot of really strong
24 statements made about -- and they had strong
25 numbers about this company, Liberty. I mean, I

1 get power from them, and I'm not complaining.
2 All of my electricity works. I'm happy about
3 that, but the bottom line is, this cost
4 increase is just unrealistic. And they talked
5 about wind farms and renewable energies. Some
6 very intelligent people spoke on that matter.
7 Everything I've heard and ever read on it, they
8 don't -- that was just a pipe dream. They
9 don't make money. They don't -- they're going
10 to put so many dollars back into the thing, and
11 it's going to get so many percentage points,
12 but it's not going to cover the cost of
13 installation. It will not cover the cost of
14 that renewable energy.

15 There were so many statements made here
16 today, but our community is going to suffer
17 tremendously if this is allowed to happen.
18 It's going -- not just a little bit, a lot.
19 And then I'm going back to my original thought,
20 who's -- who's going to be my community that
21 we're going to come together as a group to go
22 support because this increase, if it's allowed
23 to happen, and I don't think it should get any
24 increase from what I'm hearing, overpaid
25 executives, way overpaid. One man had a

1 beautiful statement of how executives with one
2 million customers made -- the executives made
3 one million dollars, where the executives for
4 this company made, what, 4.6, I think I heard
5 earlier something like that; and it's
6 unbelievable -- unbelievable amount of money.
7 So, I think they're a little top heavy.
8 They're badly managed. And there's a lot of
9 knowledge here today, but there's a lot of
10 suffering if you let this happen. I appreciate
11 you, thank you so much, and God bless all of
12 you for being here.

13 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
14 Mr. Evans. Next, we have Bill Merck, Marilyn
15 Call, Clyde Cassady, as Mr. Cassady comes down,
16 our next names are -- the first name starts
17 with a R, and the last name, I believe, is
18 Montgomery. Andrew Hurt and then Curt Lord.
19 Let me get back to Mr. Cassady. Is your last
20 name -- you have sworn, thank you, sir. And
21 then your last name is C-a-s-s-a-d-y; is that
22 correct?

23 MR. CASSADY: That's correct.

24 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you.
25 Please go ahead with your comments.

1 MR. CASSADY: I'd like to give my -- give
2 my opinion. 30, 39 percent rate increase, I
3 believe, is much too. The \$3 million salary by
4 the CEO of Liberty speaks volumes when, you
5 know, echo the gentleman that spoke just a
6 minute ago, and the one spoke that earlier in
7 his question and answer time. I request that
8 they be denied.

9 The main one -- one of the main concerns
10 that I have is, I've got a couple of -- you
11 know, I'm 71 years old. Me and my wife are on
12 fixed income. We're not wealthy people, and,
13 you know, we're going to feel this increase.
14 But I've got a couple of buddies, one is 83
15 years old, the other one is 89 years old, I
16 want to give the -- you folks a couple of
17 specifics.

18 83 year old's name is Richard. Used to
19 heat his place with wood. He's 83 years old,
20 he broke his neck last year, and I'm telling
21 you he can't heat it with wood; he can't get
22 out there and chop that wood and make that
23 happen any more; and he told me a couple of
24 years ago when he uses electric heat to heat
25 his place, it's hundreds of dollars more than

1 when he heats with wood. My friend Richard is
2 going to be greatly affected by this. He's 83
3 years old, he broke his neck. In a very
4 serious way, he's going to just have to make a
5 decision, am I going to pay my electrical bill
6 or am I going to eat? Like this lady, it's gut
7 wrenching for me to hear what this lady is
8 going through, folks.

9 I've got another friend whose name is
10 Jack. He's 89 years old. Last year in the
11 winter time, he had a bill of over \$700. My
12 friend, Jack, you do that, it could conceivably
13 add \$300, he's on Social Security. The man
14 that spoke and mentioned a \$3 million salary of
15 the CEO of this company, mentioned what he made
16 every month in Social Security. Folks, listen.
17 He's going to have to make a decision. Am I
18 going to eat three meals a day or two meals a
19 day, or am I'm going to pay my electrical bill?
20 And that's the main reason I had a lot going on
21 today, and I'm a senior citizen, 71 years old,
22 but I told my wife, we're going to go down and
23 I'm going to tell them about Jack and I'm going
24 to tell them about Richard. And I could go
25 down the list, my wife, Nikki, is here with me,

1 and I know I'm fixing to get over my time, but
2 I can go to Kathy and other person that we know
3 that you are, you know, in their 70 and 80s,
4 and Birk and Carole.

5 Don't -- be very, very considerate and
6 careful with your decisions, because the
7 decisions that are made here are going to
8 greatly affect senior citizens on fixed
9 incomes. I'm telling you. And that's all I
10 have. Sincerely, thank you for your time.
11 Thanks for listening.

12 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
13 Mr. Cassady. Roy Montgomery? And following
14 that will be Andrew Hurt, Curt Lord, and Jane
15 Douley. Mr. Montgomery, is your last named
16 M-o-n-t-g-o-m-e-r-y?

17 MR. MONTGOMERY: Yes, sir, it is.

18 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you.
19 And did you confirm earlier --

20 MR. MONTGOMERY: I did.

21 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
22 sir. I'll go ahead and set your timer. Please
23 go ahead with your comment.

24 MR. MONTGOMERY: Okay, I'll make this
25 simple, and it's going to be pretty basic. We

1 lived in the area for 20 years. My biggest
2 concern on this whole issue is it's more than a
3 rate increase on our electrical bill. It's not
4 just your electrical bill that's going up. For
5 example, a home, my neighbor called me last
6 night and says going to the meeting? I says
7 yeah. She said, well, you tell them this, she
8 says -- she lives in a big house. She's got
9 several kids, a lot of folks living with her.
10 She's a monthly billing, annual, same amount
11 each month. She's paying \$400 a month for an
12 electric bill.

13 She says if this rate increase goes up a
14 minimum, I'm going to be paying another \$120 a
15 month. I can't do it. I'm also on a POA,
16 which is the same thing as an HOA; it just
17 doesn't have anything to do with homes; has to
18 to do with managing property. But we have to
19 maintain two private wells. Our electrical
20 bill, just based on last year's amount of
21 money, is going to go up a minimum of \$600 for
22 this year, minimum. Which means we now have to
23 go back to the owners and ask for more money to
24 maintain them, because we try to keep that bill
25 down so people have money to spend elsewhere.

1 But it's going to go up. Maintenance and
2 tests and doing whatever we have to do keep the
3 two private wells going is expensive if it is
4 just with inflation stuff. Big electrical
5 bill, that's something a lot of people don't
6 think about. Oh, my electrical bill is going
7 to go up. Until they get a phone call from me
8 saying, oh, by the way, we're going to raise
9 your annual fee up this year because the
10 electricity bill went up. What? I can't pay
11 more. So, you've got that to deal with.

12 Another thing that has to be dealt with
13 other than just an electrical bill is, I don't
14 know how many folks have solar. My wife and I
15 are lucky. We manage to do well, just because
16 I'm retired military, and she's retired from a
17 government job as well, so we've gotten lucky.
18 So, we were able to pay -- put solar on the
19 house, which is great. Until it comes time and
20 you produce too much solar, then the electrical
21 company gets it. They pay us -- they started
22 paying us two and a half cents per kilowatt
23 hour that we produced that they didn't use.
24 They turn around and sell it at that time for
25 just under 13 cents.

1 Now, they're paying us 3.3 cents a
2 kilowatt hour, and they're turning it around
3 and selling it for 4.03 cents. Because that's
4 what a kilowatt hour is costing us right now,
5 is if you're at 500 watts, 500 kilowatts, you
6 pay 14.03. I brought my electric bill; that's
7 how I know it says that.

8 But if I produce extra, they give me
9 3.33 percent or 3.33 cents. That means they're
10 taking 11 cents, and they're selling it to you
11 guys, so they're making 11 cents off me for
12 every kilowatt that I send them. When they do
13 the rate increase, is that going to go up? I
14 don't know. So, my question to the Commission
15 would be -- or not question, but an ask or a
16 favor, is when you look at the numbers, please
17 make them be responsible and show them what's
18 going on; how much are they making a year;
19 where's all the money going? Show us some
20 responsibility on what you are doing with that
21 money before you ask for, because my attitude
22 has always been, you need to live within your
23 means.

24 And if you can't live within your means,
25 you need to change the way you're living.

1 Well, guess what, maybe they need to change the
2 way they do business. They mentioned one thing
3 in our question and answer period about, well,
4 you know, if we don't get this money, we're not
5 going to be able to provide this service.
6 We're not going to be able to provide that one.
7 No, it had nothing to do with that. And their
8 service was terrible a year or so ago, when
9 their billing went crap.

10 Three months we went without a bill. I
11 finally got some, but it was a month late, and
12 then said we didn't own them anything. So, my
13 wife calls them and says, well, yeah, you're
14 going to owe us, but we'll catch up. I says,
15 no, you won't. So, we went down and wrote a
16 check, paid them right then and there; and it
17 was a little bit over, but I says I don't want
18 to be dealing with extra money. So, their
19 billing is still messed up.

20 We had problems with the billing for the
21 wells, and that was all out of whack. So, I
22 would ask them to be more fiscally responsible
23 for their business, before they start asking us
24 to cover their mistakes, and I think that's --
25 personally, I think that's what they're asking

1 us to do, because they have not asked about it.

2 So, with that, I'll leave that go -- I can
3 see I'm probably out of time. To close, bottom
4 line, please, Commission, I know you're going
5 to do the responsible thing, but make them be
6 responsible. Find out, where's the money
7 going, what are they doing with it, and why
8 they've got to have the extra money, because
9 they haven't talked about cutting serving or
10 doing anything different. They just say they
11 want more money, but where's it going? So,
12 thank you for your time.

13 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
14 Mr. Montgomery. I appreciate your service and
15 appreciate you being here this afternoon.
16 Andrew Hurt? And Mr. Hurt, is your last name
17 spelled H-u-r-t?

18 MR. HURT: Yes, sir.

19 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: And did you
20 confirm you'd be testifying truthfully?

21 MR. HURT: Yes, sir.

22 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you.
23 Please go ahead with your comments.

24 MR. HURT: Thank you. One thing that I
25 think that needs to be addressed that I don't

1 really -- haven't heard people talk about is
2 that is overall since the Trump administration
3 took over, the price of energy has been
4 decreasing. These numbers pulled all of -- I
5 used AI to pull this, but gas is down
6 12 percent overall nationwide. Crude oil 17.5.
7 Natural gas, which holds 42 percent of the
8 market share of electric generation supply, has
9 come down 27 percent in price.

10 So, what really we're looking at here is
11 as the price of energy and to produce energy is
12 coming down, they want to raise the costs.
13 And, so, what this will look like, right,
14 over -- because we're not just looking
15 backwards, we have to look forward about what's
16 coming, what is going to happen is they are
17 going to be getting a lot more than your 30 or
18 40 percent on the back end. We just won't see
19 it. It could be 60, 70 percent that they will
20 actually be getting.

21 And this -- the cost of energy going down
22 is only expected to continue, especially with
23 the pro-energy, pro-fossil fuel administration
24 currently in the White House. But as we pay
25 for this 30, 40 percent increase ourselves, as

1 many people have already stated, there's going
2 to business -- businesses are going to have to
3 move some of this cost onto the consumer, and
4 that's going to be us paying for even more
5 energy costs who live in these communities.
6 People are suffering.

7 We have endured four years of a Biden
8 administration, who was anti-energy, and just
9 as we are getting ready to come out of this,
10 people started to get a glimmer of hope,
11 Liberty Utilities comes in and tries to crush
12 that. There's elderly people who are on fixed
13 incomes. Single moms working two jobs to put
14 food on the table, you think they can afford
15 this? Young people, my generation,
16 millennials, Gen Z, right, owning a home is
17 further and further out of reach, but what are
18 we told? We're told you will own nothing and
19 be happy. And this is only furthering that.
20 What's the solution? Get a third job?

21 You know, there's -- there's something
22 that came to mind when I was thinking about
23 this, an old movie called It's A Wonderful
24 Life. George Bailey was addressing Mr. Potter,
25 right, and he said this rabble you're talking

1 about, they do most of the working and paying
2 and living and dying in this community. It is
3 too much to ask that they work and pay and live
4 and die in a couple of decent beds and a bath.
5 That ability is getting further and further out
6 of reach. I can tell you this, that if this
7 passes, the headline that will read into the
8 hearts and minds of people in Missouri will be
9 Liberty Utilities knows how to kick a man when
10 he's down. And in closing, I just say that if
11 the Commission passes this at this current rate
12 or pretty much at all, it will further erode
13 the trust in our government, who is supposed to
14 be protecting the people. And, so, it would be
15 my call to just do the right thing. Thank you.

16 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
17 Mr. Hurt. I appreciate you being here today.
18 Curt Lord? And Mr. Lord, is your last name
19 spelled L-o-r-d.

20 MR. LORD: L-o-r-d, just like in heaven.

21 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
22 sir.

23 MR. LORD: And I promise to tell the
24 truth. So, my name is Curt Lord, and I own two
25 hotels in Branson. Now, these aren't tourist

1 hotels. These are the hotels that cater to the
2 working citizens of our community. They work
3 for general contractors. Not the Buffalo
4 construction general contractors building a
5 Texas Roadhouse. Those people will be here
6 today in the state and gone tomorrow to the
7 next project.

8 But I cater to the workers, the citizens
9 of this community, who are here to stay and
10 give back to the community. So, when I have to
11 pass on this over 30 percent increase, the very
12 citizens, the productive people, that want to
13 live in this state, to stay in this community,
14 to give back, are going to scatter. Don't
15 start that ball rolling.

16 Now, we talked about return on equity 9.5,
17 10 percent, but let's really look at this
18 carefully. The return on equity for the co-ops
19 is about 4 or 5 percent. Now, the PSA -- PS --
20 Public Service Commission did say, well, that's
21 a little different type of structure. That's a
22 nonprofit. Liberty is a profit. But wait a
23 second, yes, Liberty has more expenses as a
24 profit, but we heard in the question and answer
25 session that a big part of those expenses is a

1 \$4.5 million salary of the CEO of Liberty, and
2 that is a different type of property. They
3 have higher expenses, and the people in this
4 room and this community should not have to be
5 paid more for their electrical bill because of
6 a different corporate structure.

7 Now, here's what you should look at it.
8 You should look at what's going on in the
9 Ozarks. We talk about White River. There's
10 another one that's in the Ozarks. The
11 Northwest Arkansas Electric Cooperative, and in
12 the question and answer session, I asked the
13 counsel for Liberty, would you please provide
14 the Public Service Commission a comparison of
15 your proposed rates after the 30 something
16 percent and their existing rates. That's what
17 we should be comparing. What's going on in the
18 Ozarks, and how much more will we be paying
19 versus our neighbors in the Ozarks.

20 Now, the other thing that the legal
21 counsel for Liberty suggested in the question
22 and answer session is, hey, you have the right
23 as citizens to petition to get away from
24 Liberty, to join White River, if you want to.
25 Now, they also mentioned that's not normally

1 granted in regular circumstances, but that's
2 not what this is. This is not a rate increase
3 of 6 percent requested. This isn't a rate
4 increase with a company that has been having
5 great billing success. No, this is an
6 extraordinary situation of a rate increase of
7 over 30 percent with a company that has had
8 tremendous customer problems, billing issues,
9 wasteful projects and bloated management
10 overhead. So, yes, we should -- the PSC should
11 allow us the ability to transfer to another
12 provider because they are extraordinary
13 circumstances.

14 And here's the thing: we're all from
15 Missouri. We're asking our PSC to show us, the
16 citizens, that you recognize that this type of
17 rate increase will devastate our local
18 community. Will you show us that you're
19 listening? Thank you.

20 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
21 Mr. Lord. I appreciate you being here today.
22 Jane Douley? Thomas Helcromb (ph.)? Thomas
23 Helcromb? Carmen Lawson? Anthony Wheeler?
24 Ashley Exendine and following Ms. Exendine will
25 be Joe Reish, Jeff Bullen, Lori Hayes. First,

1 am I pronouncing your name correctly?

2 MS. EXENDINE: It's Exendine.

3 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Exendine,
4 and is that spelled E-x-e-n-d-i-n-e?

5 MS. EXENDINE: That is correct, and I
6 swore in.

7 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
8 Ms. Exendine. Please go ahead and give us your
9 comments.

10 MS. EXENDINE: Thank you, first of all to
11 the Missouri Public Service Commission, and to
12 those serving in this hearing, my prayer is
13 that the outcome of this hearing is to protect
14 the residents in our community. One of the
15 things I really want to talk about is some of
16 the things that came up in the question and
17 answer session. Liberty Utilities repeatedly
18 mentioned a cost of service formula, yet, there
19 were no indicators there was any actual audited
20 cost used in the formula.

21 In addition, neither the audited cost or
22 the formula has been provided for customers to
23 justify the price increase. It was, however,
24 confirmed within the question and answer
25 session that there has been a mismanagement of

1 funds that has resulted in massive turnovers,
2 eliminations of executive positions and a new
3 CEO. I have spoken with a Liberty Utilities
4 employee, and while this is secondhand
5 information that I cannot confirm entirely, I
6 was told that the billing issues that have
7 occurred for me and many others here today
8 resulted from a software upgrade that cost
9 million of dollars to implement. Executives
10 were advised against the implementation of this
11 software program, and as a result of the
12 failure of that software and the mismanagement
13 of millions of dollars to implement that
14 software, that executive position was fired.

15 Liberty Utilities has not justified a 29
16 to 39 increase depending on usage, when their
17 current rate is already 16, 33 above the rates
18 that a local company, Whitewater (sic)
19 Electric, charges. And I understand that they
20 are a co-op, and that Liberty Utilities is a
21 for-profit organization. As a comparison,
22 White River Electric increased their rates from
23 \$11.549 per unit to 12.001 per unit in January
24 of this year. The new rates proposed would be
25 \$18.584 to \$22.2. That's \$2 per unit. That is

1 nearly double the rate as the other local
2 provider. In addition, there are already
3 indicators that Liberty Utilities will request
4 further rate increases once Senate Bill 4 takes
5 effect to fund future projects.

6 Some of those indicators were given during
7 the question and answer session. Not only is
8 this going to be a burden for local residents,
9 but it's also going to affect the ability for
10 us to sell our homes. And buyers are already
11 preferentially buying homes that are part of
12 the White River co-op, and I don't blame them.
13 If this rate increase goes through, then a home
14 in the same town on Liberty Utilities would pay
15 twice the amount as someone on White River
16 Electric. I ask that the Missouri Commission
17 refuse and completely deny the rate increase
18 request.

19 Even the recommendation from the PSC staff
20 to allow increased rates by 121.8 million, I
21 think, is the amount are not justified based on
22 the mismanagement of the funds that we have
23 seen as customers. Thank you.

24 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
25 ma'am. I appreciate you being here today. Our

1 next witness is Joe Reish. And, sir, is your
2 last name is spelled R-e-i-s-h?

3 MR. REISH: Yes, and I was sworn.

4 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
5 sir. Please go ahead with your comments.

6 MR. REISH: Okay. After the moving
7 testimony that many have already given, I would
8 ask the Public Service Commission, Chairman
9 Hahn, to not vote in favor of this rate
10 increase. I can recap billing issues. I could
11 not attend the hearing you had last month on
12 that score, but a billing issue has come up
13 again. Executive pay is out of line for others
14 in the industry. Mismanagement continues to be
15 a problem. And Mr. Moore referenced, this
16 increase locks in a cog, a brick in the wall of
17 inflation, that will not go down if costs
18 should turn around. I am not old enough to
19 remember the deflationary year of 1937, but the
20 folks were here and were in business and
21 suffered through a year where prices actually
22 declined.

23 We don't want to see that. As many banks
24 failed in 1937, as they did in 1930, '31, '32.
25 It was bad. Manage it the best you can. We do

1 not want to lock in an excessive rate of
2 inflation. For this reason, I would ask
3 Chairman Hahn and the Public Service
4 Commission, to vote against this rate increase.

5 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
6 Mr. Reish, I appreciate you being here today.
7 Next, we have Jeff Bullen. The next names
8 after Mr. Bullen, are Lori Hayes, Patrick
9 Schooley.

10 MR. BULLEN: Good afternoon,
11 commissioners.

12 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Yes,
13 Mr. Bullen, is your last named spelled
14 B-u-l-l-e-n?

15 MR. BULLEN: That's correct.

16 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Am I
17 pronouncing it correctly?

18 MR. BULLEN: Yes, you are.

19 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: And did you
20 agree that you'd be testifying truthfully
21 earlier?

22 MR. BULLEN: I did.

23 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
24 please go ahead with your comments.

25 MR. BULLEN: There's been many salient

1 points, actionable points by the Q&A responders
2 here, and today just now. This is a disastrous
3 event. I can't imagine the PSC having to face
4 a client that is asking for reimbursement for
5 repairs or whatever that weren't even
6 estimated, bid on, and so forth in advance.
7 It's interesting, I started out in the '70s on
8 the Board of Directors for the first public
9 utility districts for the State of Oregon.
10 There was 13 different districts. And wouldn't
11 you know, there was a group out of Manhattan,
12 New York City, called Government Against -- or
13 Citizens Against Government Takeover, and they
14 were supposed to act on the behalf of the
15 citizens. Which in the state of Oregon
16 already, you had the city of Eugene was
17 municipally owned. Their rates were quite a
18 bit less than Pacific Power & Light, which was
19 the neighboring area's investor-owned utility.

20 So, this does work. That's why White
21 River works, it's because the money is
22 reinvested into the local communities. It's
23 gotten to the point where it's -- I've been
24 tracking my own bills here in Forsyth. There's
25 mysterious gaps. I had the highest bill ever

1 this past winter. I said, what? I'm a
2 certified energy manager with the Association
3 of Energy Engineers, so I starting tracking it
4 by hour, and mysterious gaps were still showing
5 up. When you add it all together, they
6 don't -- they don't compile correctly. This is
7 mismanagement in the most egregious manner. I
8 just spent the last 12 years of my career with
9 the Marine Corps, 29 Palms. I had -- I was an
10 employee contractor, and what we were doing was
11 monitoring utility usage for the bases of the
12 Marine Corps.

13 Our contract is being held by the GSA, and
14 the Pentagon. And what I found, you know, all
15 the movement for the renewable energy, yes, the
16 electric vehicles, they're getting more
17 responsible. But the subsidies are causing
18 back-end costs to just escalate out of control.
19 And something needs to be done. We need to be
20 back to the basics where you clean the slate
21 and get people that know how these systems
22 work, whether a, you know, the marketers on
23 megawatts or at the base level what it costs
24 per kilowatt hour to run any kind of
25 technology. So, that's what I would encourage

1 is get a commission here within the group,
2 State of Missouri even, through our leaders
3 Brian Seitz, Brad Hudson, Josh Hawley. This
4 is -- needs to act right now. Thanks for your
5 time.

6 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
7 Mr. Bullen. Thank you for your service and
8 thank you for being here today. Laurie Hayes.
9 I did. Anthony Wheeler? Excellent. Come on
10 down. Sorry about that. Is your last name
11 spelled W-h-e-e-l-e-r?

12 MR. WHEELER: Yes, it is.

13 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Did you
14 previously agree to testify truthfully?

15 MR. WHEELER: Indeed, I did.

16 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
17 please go ahead.

18 MR. WHEELER: I'm not going to belabor the
19 point of the size of the rate increases. You
20 know, it's somewhere between 29 and 40 percent
21 depending upon your usage. So, that being
22 said, and I think that, you know, when you look
23 at that, nobody's ever seen anything like that
24 in any other commodity that they buy or own or
25 utilize. You know if your 401K went up 40

1 percent, you know, you'd be dancing, and,
2 obviously, if it didn't, it went down
3 40 percent, then you'd be worried about, you
4 know, where your next meal was coming from.

5 So, I think that we've heard numerous
6 stories about mismanagement of Liberty. I'd
7 like to take that just a little bit further and
8 talk about Algonquin and what their situation
9 is. They bet heavily into renewables, and they
10 were having trouble with capitalization with
11 that. They went ahead and took out debt for
12 that, and because it was expensive debt, you
13 know, it cost them a lot of money to start
14 that. They didn't have a capitalization to buy
15 the renewables, so lenders said, well, okay, it
16 will be a higher interest rate for your debt.
17 It was based upon interest rates. It's
18 variable. It goes up just like somebody has a
19 variable rate mortgage.

20 Those didn't pan out, okay, so the cost of
21 their debt skyrocketed once interest rates
22 started to go up, their renewables didn't
23 perform, and, so, that margin was very low.
24 Finally, they decided to scrap it all, like we
25 heard earlier from the representative, and they

1 sold all their renewable projects, but they
2 didn't get what they thought was an appropriate
3 price.

4 So, we've heard about mismanagement from
5 Liberty, and even if you look further to their
6 parent company, you see unbelievable
7 mismanagement. You see dividend cuts. Their
8 stock price is going down. The investors are
9 scared, so I think those kinds of things need
10 to be taken into consideration. You know, if
11 you put yourself into some sort of financial
12 straight, then it's up to you to get out of it,
13 and I personally don't think it's appropriate
14 for a company that's a monopoly to pass that
15 burden onto us.

16 The other energy companies that Algonquin
17 owns, and they're numerous across the country,
18 also are undergoing rate increases, and it's my
19 thought that probably, you know, a whole lot of
20 that going back to support, you know, the
21 parent company. So, and I don't -- I have to
22 say I disagree with the PSC. Your summation is
23 that it's 24 percent. You're willing to go for
24 it at \$120 million. That's about 24 percent on
25 the low end that the PSC is agreeing to. OPC,

1 at \$100 million, you're saying, well, we're
2 okay with a 20 percent. I mean, I don't think
3 that's -- that's appropriate in any case, you
4 know. This is not a -- this is not a rich
5 community. It's not a wealthy community, and I
6 think it creates an undue hardship on everybody
7 that lives here, and I don't think the -- I
8 think the rate increase should be denied.
9 That's it.

10 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you.
11 I appreciate that, Mr. Wheeler. And I
12 apologize for not catching your name earlier.
13 There we go. His time was really, really up.
14 We had a couple alarms going up haze. And
15 Ms. Hayes, is your last name spelled H-a-y-e-s?

16 MS. HAYES: That is correct.

17 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
18 and did you agree?

19 MS. HAYES: I did.

20 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you.
21 Please go ahead with your comments.

22 MS. HAYES: Thank you for having me here
23 today. You've heard from a large segment of
24 our population. I'm here to represent your
25 commercial customers. I'm currently the

1 executive director of the Branson Area Lodging
2 Association. I'm also executive director of
3 the Missouri Hotel Lodging Association. I'm
4 here today to talk to you about the Branson
5 lodging industry.

6 One of the lodging facilities largest
7 expenses is its utilities. No one wants to
8 stay in a hot hotel room. You don't want to
9 swim in the swimming pool when it's dark. So,
10 that's a large expense for these facilities.
11 With the proposed increases, a 100 room lodging
12 facility would experience about a \$35,000 a
13 year increase, okay. That's a significant
14 number. That's a full-time year-around
15 employee at minimum wage. That's what we're
16 talking about. In Branson alone, we have over
17 13,000 hotel rooms.

18 So, if you multiply those numbers out, the
19 amount that will it cost the lodging industry
20 in Branson, Missouri, is over four and a half
21 million dollars. If you look at that number
22 that you're trying -- they're trying to collect
23 as a whole, 3 percent of that overall cost is
24 going to be paid by the lodging industry
25 strictly in Branson, Missouri.

1 Now, I don't know about you guys, but if
2 my child came to me on Tuesday, and I had given
3 them their allowance on Saturday, and they
4 said, hey, mom, I went and spent a lot more
5 money than I planned on, and I don't have any
6 way to make any other money, so I'm going to
7 need you to give me more allowance, I would
8 tell my child, I'm sorry; you didn't manage
9 your funds correctly; you're going to have wait
10 until next week.

11 This -- this business model of spend and
12 then charge your customers, I think, is
13 absolutely backwards. Most companies, if they
14 plan on making capital expenditures, they look
15 at their reserves and what their company can
16 absorb, and then they make those plans to make
17 those purchases. I don't think it's fair and
18 equitable with the billing problems that we've
19 had to even be looking at their financials.

20 I don't think any office should look at
21 those financials. Until they can correct those
22 billing problems, I don't think that they have
23 accurate financials. They need to go back to
24 refocusing on their internal issues before they
25 come to the public and to you, and ask for us

1 to give them more money. It's a significant
2 increase, and I would encourage you to deny it
3 as it stands. Get them to get you real
4 numbers, and then go back to the drawing board.
5 Thank you for your time.

6 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
7 Ms. Hayes. I appreciate you coming out today.
8 Patrick Schooley. The next name I have is
9 Neil, and the last name starts S-h. Brian
10 Karn. Harold Nester. Daryl Birdsong. Come on
11 up. Just before we get started, another couple
12 of names, Arlie Townsend. Aman Adams. I'll
13 have to stop there. Mr. Birdsong, is your last
14 name spelled B-i-r-d-s-o-n-g?

15 MR. BIRDSONG: Yes, sir.

16 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: And did you
17 previously agree that your testimony would be
18 truthful?

19 MR. BIRDSONG: I'm sworn in.

20 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you.
21 Please go ahead with your comment.

22 MR. BIRDSONG: My partner and I, we own
23 two small businesses here in Branson. We're
24 still manufacturing fab shops, small
25 construction company, material sales. We're

1 involved in a small business community. For
2 those who are not from here, the majority of
3 this community is small business owners. You
4 know, ma and pop outfits who we employ as many
5 people as we can employ. This is a challenging
6 economy, because service costs and everything.
7 We can't keep pace with what the rest of the
8 country is.

9 I wanted to mention that within the past
10 two weeks, four small businesses that we are
11 friends and that we know had to fold. Small
12 businesses right now, we're under attack
13 everywhere in the economy, from predatory
14 insurance rates to gross inflation; these are
15 all costs that are a challenge for us to pass
16 onto our customers, especially since our
17 services aren't directly related to an end
18 customer, you know. We have to bid work;
19 anticipate what that work is going to cost;
20 then predict what then is. Then, when we have
21 shortfallings, guess what, we take it in the
22 teeth. That's part of being a business owner.
23 That's part of being an American.

24 I would ask that the PSC hold Liberty to
25 the same standards that we are held to and that

1 our four friends are held to, who had to fold
2 their businesses. These are not people who
3 work three, four hours a day. These are
4 skilled craftsmen. These are people who work
5 10, 12 hours a day. We average 12-hour days.
6 We should be working right now. I'll probably
7 be working until 9:00 o'clock tonight when I
8 leave this meeting, just to keep our doors
9 open.

10 We're not being made rich right now. We
11 have been operating, personally, at a loss for
12 the past year because of the way the economy is
13 and other issues. Liberty should be held to
14 the same standard that we are as business
15 owners. If you mismanage your business, you
16 should fail. I don't care if it's a large
17 business or not.

18 Second point I want to move on to, we've
19 been talking about the trees when we should
20 look at the forest right now, okay? The
21 mismanagement and everything that has taken
22 place in Liberty, that's fine and dandy. What
23 we should really be looking at is what the
24 importance of energy is in any economy. Energy
25 is the foundation of any economy. It's not

1 just people heating their homes. It's how
2 small businesses, everything, the cost of your
3 milk, the cost of something getting to your
4 house on the truck. We should not -- we should
5 view energy as something that should be
6 community-moderated. The same way that we
7 community moderate our roads, that are part of
8 our infrastructure. It's opening our community
9 up to a liability to allow corporate greed and
10 other entities to become involved in that
11 infrastructure that's so crucial to any
12 economy.

13 White River keeps being pointed out.
14 These larger communities, like Springfield with
15 city utilities, when they transfer -- when they
16 go to a community-operated system, it always
17 works good. I just don't feel that there's
18 enough room or safety in a system where you
19 have potential greed that can affect the wider
20 infrastructure of the economy. Am I making
21 sense? Yeah, that's probably my three minutes.

22 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
23 sir. I appreciate you coming out this
24 afternoon. Arlie Townsend. El Aman C. Adams?
25 Rob Collegate? Michael Obranovic. Thank you.

1 And as Mr. Obranovic makes his way, we have two
2 remaining names on the sign-up list, and that
3 would be Sue Braun and then Doug Clark.
4 Mr. Obranovic, is your last name spelled
5 O-b-r-a-n-o-v-i-c?

6 MR. OBRANOVIC: Yes.

7 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
8 and did you agree with the oath earlier today
9 that your testimony would be truthful?

10 MR. OBRANOVIC: Yes.

11 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you.
12 Please go ahead with your comments.

13 MR. OBRANOVIC: I think -- I think what we
14 all want from a power company is low costs,
15 reliable energy. But the energy that we have
16 been getting from Liberty has been higher than
17 the average costs. It has been higher than the
18 average cost in the past. And, now, they want
19 to put an extra 30 to 40 percent increase on
20 top of that to make it totally unrealistic.
21 The -- you know, when they invested in this --
22 they keep talking about return on equity and
23 garbage like that, when they invested in this
24 business, it wasn't a government bond or
25 something that they bought. There's no --

1 there's no guarantees in business.

2 If you're -- if you make bad decisions,
3 which they -- there's a record of it; everybody
4 in here has been talking about bad decisions.
5 Bad decisions, you pay your executive staff an
6 exuberant amount of money, you're destined to
7 fail. And you can't just go then to your
8 customers and say, hey, we're going to fail.
9 We're going to raise your rates to an exuberant
10 amount to cover our losses. That's --
11 that's -- that's not the way business should
12 work.

13 Now, this -- this is -- this is not --
14 this is not (sic) a thing is going to affect
15 the electric rates for regular people like me.
16 I'm living on Social Security. And I'm not
17 going to get a 30, 40, 50 percent rate any time
18 soon. But what this affects, not only my
19 electric rates, but like other people have
20 mentioned, it will affect my grocery bill;
21 because, hey, all the groceries are going to go
22 up, because they've got to pay their electric
23 bills, too. You know, all of that is going to
24 go up. It's going to affect my clothing costs.
25 It's going to affect -- well, it's just going

1 to affect just everything.

2 So, my -- the end result of this rate
3 increase, if it goes through, wouldn't be just
4 30 percent of my -- it might be 30 percent of
5 my cost of living, which would put me at a
6 point where I couldn't hardly afford to live.
7 And I just think it's just a -- it's just a
8 ridiculous amount. I can't believe that anyone
9 that looks at it in a reasonable manner would
10 even consider that this rate increase has any
11 merit. Thank you.

12 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
13 sir. I appreciate you being here today. Sue
14 Braun? Doug Clark? After Mr. Clark is done
15 with his comments, I will open this back up to
16 the audience, anybody who hasn't signed up or
17 testified already. Mr. Clark, is your last
18 named spelled C-l-a-r-k?

19 MR. CLARK: Correct.

20 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you.
21 Did you previously agree that your testimony
22 would be truthful?

23 MR. CLARK: Yes.

24 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you.
25 Please go ahead with your comments.

1 MR. CLARK: Well, what I've examined here
2 from the previous meeting I went to and the
3 people that commented on the panels, is that
4 when businesses make decisions that affect a
5 community like this, the responsibility of the
6 community and the Public Service Commission is
7 go into the minutia of how we got to this point
8 here, okay. We're not regulating this stuff at
9 the right point, okay. We have international
10 organizations, number one, the UN. If you
11 don't think any involvement here in what
12 happened here with this company, they set them
13 up for failure, is what they did.

14 And we allowed them to come in here from
15 an outside source from Canada and intervene in
16 our way that we do business here, and take
17 advantage to get whatever tax write-offs they
18 get in Canada for buying us. Not only that,
19 they got to introduce the software package that
20 caused all the consternation on billing, okay.

21 So, we fix something that wasn't broke
22 particularly, other than the financial part of
23 it that was created by the substantiality
24 policy that was invented for this purpose back
25 in the 1980s, influenced through the 1992s with

1 the Rio conference there that set out the
2 agenda, '21, which is what that was for; and
3 then President Clinton put it in as the
4 President's Council on Substantiality without a
5 vote of the people. So, all this environmental
6 stuff that's causing all the problems in the
7 energy sector, about, quote, "Fossil fuels and
8 carbon", is a bunch of nonsense. It was
9 designed to destroy our living here in this
10 country.

11 If you read UNESCO, if you read the WHO,
12 you read all these people running that stuff
13 from the 19 -- late 1940s, they tell you
14 exactly what they are going to do to us. You
15 just have to look it up. Who can say, oh, who
16 was the head of UNESCO back in the late 1940s,
17 the first attorney general or the secretary
18 general, and he'll tell you. You can even pull
19 it up on a statement by the gentleman himself.
20 The same thing with the World Health
21 Organization. They tell you what they're going
22 to do to you.

23 So, here we are, we're allowing an
24 international policy-making body that has
25 nothing to do with our form of government here,

1 whatsoever. We have allowed it to happen to
2 ourselves because we have not been paying
3 attention to the administrative level of how
4 this got introduced into our communities and
5 the country.

6 So, you know, my thing is, we had some
7 instructions from our people that invented our
8 form of government that said be eternally
9 vigilant. We're not being eternally vigilant
10 on what's happening to our economy. Now,
11 electricity, if you don't have a low
12 electricity rate, you don't have an industrial
13 capacity. You can't produce things in a cheap
14 enough manner to make it affordable for the
15 public, and the energy sector is the same
16 thing. Pretty soon you're going to kill the
17 goose that laid the golden egg here in this
18 country, and this isn't going to do anything,
19 not that anybody can afford to buy anything,
20 let alone food for, examples we heard today.

21 So, I don't think it's fair. Now, the
22 other thing, one of the founders said was that,
23 James Madison said, your most important part of
24 your private property is your conscience, okay.
25 And he said in a statement in a thing he wrote

1 in 18 -- 1792 in a gazette article he wrote
2 what private property amounted to, and that was
3 the last thing he said. If you don't have a
4 conscience of what you're doing to your
5 citizens, then this is what happens. You allow
6 the greasesters and these manipulators and the
7 financial institutions and our public servants
8 to buy into a load of baloney in what has to
9 happen in an electric utility to be
10 sustainable. We've cut our own throats.

11 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Mr. Clark,
12 I appreciate that. Your time has expired.
13 Will you finish up your thoughts? All right,
14 thank you, sir. And we have Tim Gould. We do
15 have a microphone that we can give you in your
16 seat.

17 MR. GOULD: Thank you. I appreciate that.

18 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Mr. Gould,
19 is your last name spelled G-o-u-l-d?

20 MR. GOULD: Yes, it is, sir.

21 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: And did you
22 agree with the testimony that your testimony
23 would be truthful?

24 MR. GOULD: Yes, sir.

25 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you.

1 Please go ahead with your comments.

2 MR. GOULD: Okay. Well, a lot of the
3 things that were said today, and I could speak
4 in regard to the fixed-income population. You
5 know, here in Branson, it's over 24 percent
6 fixed income. I am a retired teacher. Spent
7 over 32 years here in Missouri; we are 49th in
8 teacher pay in the nation, and that affects the
9 retirement income as well. But I really wanted
10 to address another population group, which my
11 son-in-law and my daughter are involved in.
12 The poverty line here in Branson is 19 percent,
13 whereas the state averages 12. If you're from
14 Jefferson City, it's 12.5.

15 So, we are a larger population of poverty
16 line individuals. My daughter is a renter.
17 They have no hope in the current future. They
18 would like to buy a home, but that's not
19 available to them because of their financial
20 situation. They have a Liberty account, and we
21 have been in dispute with Liberty over their
22 account three times in the last two years.
23 They're still in dispute over billing practices
24 and the statements that they received for those
25 bills.

1 So, in regard to your comment, sir, from
2 the Office of Public Counsel, we believe that
3 until they get their act together in regard to
4 these billing issues, and I don't believe my
5 daughter is the only one that is still involved
6 in that issue, that any kind of increase would
7 not be something that would be to -- to the
8 benefit of our community.

9 The history of the rate for Liberty, back
10 in 2020, they asked for a 0.4 increase. Fifty
11 cents per -- per average monthly bill. And,
12 now, they're asking for 40 to \$50 worth of
13 increase per month. In '22, they asked for a
14 \$10 per average increase for a person at a
15 7.53 percent increase. In November, they asked
16 for a 16 percent increase that was in 2024, and
17 now, they have changed that and modified that
18 to the percentage rate that they're asking for
19 now.

20 In a comment that Mr. Wilson made earlier
21 today, he said -- he said that they understand
22 that they've had recent economic conditions
23 that make it tough for Missouri families, and
24 there is never a good time for a change, and
25 that was during 2024. But in today's comment,

1 he did not include recent economic conditions
2 as being a problem. Thank you.

3 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
4 Mr. Gould, I appreciate you being here and your
5 comments. That concludes the list of witnesses
6 I had signed up. Are there any of those
7 persons in the audience who did not sign up,
8 have not yet testified, who would like to give
9 their comments to the Commission? Yes, sir,
10 come on down. After this witness, we'll be
11 making some closing comments and then
12 adjourning the hearing. Sir, please go ahead
13 and give us your name.

14 MR. CARNER: Jeff Carner, C-a-r-n-e-r.

15 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
16 Mr. Carner. Did I ask you previously -- no,
17 you didn't. Let me swear you in real quick.

18 (Jeff Carner sworn.)

19 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
20 sir. I will set your timer. Please go ahead
21 with your comments.

22 MR. CARNER: Won't take long. I didn't
23 plan on saying anything. You guys, the
24 Committee that's going to decide this, and all,
25 I don't know how all this stuff works. We've

1 heard the numbers and the mismanagement and all
2 that stuff. Yeah. What hurts me, this is the
3 United States of America. How this got to this
4 point, it disturbs me. Because it's totally
5 ridiculous for a mega million or billion dollar
6 outfit to have the brass to ask for a 30 to
7 40 percent bump like that, and to lay it on
8 people they've got the market hold on. How it
9 even got to this point, you saw how full this
10 room was. The energy, the time, the money,
11 it's costing people to show up to voice their
12 opinions, is against it, how ridiculous it is.
13 There have been all kinds of reasons stated why
14 it shouldn't be allowed, and it bothers me how
15 it even got to this point. I know these are
16 the beginning stages, but how it even got here
17 just disturbs me. It shouldn't even have made
18 it this far. But just use your common sense
19 and do the right thing. Appreciate your time.

20 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
21 sir. I appreciate you being here today. Okay,
22 seeing no further hands. Any closing comments?

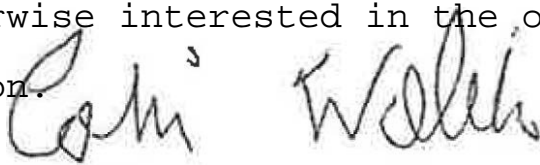
23 CHAIR HAHN: Thank you, Judge. As a
24 gentleman stated earlier who left, just want to
25 sincerely thank you for your time. And as the

1 last gentleman said, we know your time is very
2 valuable. Many of you spent probably three and
3 a half hours here now, we just got to the end
4 of the list. But we are listening. We do hear
5 you, and thank you.

6 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Yes, I'd
7 like to echo those comments, and thank everyone
8 for participating, for coming out today. If
9 you know of someone who would like to still
10 make comments, they can go online. The PSC
11 Commission has a website, psc.mo.gov.
12 Psc.mo.gov. In the upper right-hand corner, it
13 says Submit Commits. Just make sure to include
14 this case number, and this is ER-2024-0261.
15 With that again, my sincere appreciation to
16 everyone. This hearing is now adjourned, and
17 we are off the record.

18 (Ending time of the hearing: 3:12 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.



17 within and for the State of Missouri
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