

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. GR-2024-0261
Rates for Electric Service)
Provided to Customers In Its)
Missouri Service Area)

July 23, 2025
6:00 p.m.

Webex

VOLUME VI

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: 7:32 p.m.)

REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: We'll restart the hearing again. Let's get on the record. It is July 23rd, 2025. The time is 7:32 p.m. The question and answer portion of the hearing is what just occurred. The Commission does divide their hearings into -- local public hearing into two portions. The second portion is the testimonial portion, which is where the commissioners will hear your comments about the pending rate case. This is the Liberty Request for a Rate Increase. This is case number ER-2024-0261.

My name is Charles Hatcher. I'm the regulatory law judge that will be overseeing this hearing. I do apologize for my connection issues. Hopefully that has been taken care of. The Commission does regulate the rates charged by public utility companies to ensure those rates are just and reasonable. The Commission also regulates the quality of service and safety of operations of public utilities.

The Commission is made up of five commissioners, and there is one vacancy at the

1 moment. The commissioners include Chair Kayla
2 Hahn, Commissioner Maida Coleman, Commissioner
3 Glenn Kolkmeyer and Commissioner John Mitchell.
4 With me today are all four currently serving
5 commissioners. Would any commissioner like to
6 make an opening statement?

7 COMMISSIONER HAHN: Sure, Judge Hatcher.
8 That is Chair Hahn. Just want to take a second
9 and welcome everyone to the local public
10 hearing this evening. We know that you could
11 do a lot of things with your evening times, so
12 we really appreciate you spending your time
13 tonight offering us your comments. This part
14 of the rate case process is a very important
15 one, because it's one where we get to hear
16 directly from the public. So, we will be
17 listening intently and just appreciate you
18 coming on tonight. Thank you.

19 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
20 Chair. Now, we'll turn to the parties. And I
21 asked them to go and enter their appearance for
22 the record. For Liberty.

23 MS. CARTER: Good evening, Judge. This is
24 Diana Carter for the Empire Electric Company
25 doing business as Liberty.

1 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
2 and for the Staff of the Commission?

3 MR. VANDERGRIFF: Good evening, your
4 Honor. I'm Eric Vandergriff for staff. Our
5 business address is the Governor Office
6 Building at 200 Madison Street, P.O. Box 360,
7 Jefferson City, Missouri 65102.

8 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: And thank
9 you. And for the Office of the Public Counsel.

10 MR. WILLIAMS: Nathan Williams, appearing
11 on behalf of the Office of the Public Counsel
12 and the public. My information is already in
13 the record.

14 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you.
15 And we have had a number of intervening
16 authorities in this case. I would offer them
17 the opportunity to introduce themselves if they
18 would like. Go ahead. Okay, hearing none.

19 This is a fairly well attended hearing, so
20 we do need to limit the time that we can allow
21 for each speaker. The reason that we do limit
22 the time, so the Commission can make sure they
23 hear your comments, as well all of your
24 neighbor's comments who have come out to
25 the public hearing. So, I will be having a

1 timer set for three minutes for each commenter,
2 and at the end of three minutes, I will just
3 let you know your time is up and ask you to
4 finish your thought.

5 Now, I would ask everyone please be polite
6 and courteous and respect everyone's opinions.
7 Just the same as you would ask of them. And we
8 do have a couple of names lined in advance, so
9 I will be calling on those witnesses first.
10 And what I will do, I will announce that name,
11 and then since is a WebEx hearing, it's going
12 to be a little different; but to let you know,
13 if you're on a telephone, it is pressing star
14 six to unmute yourself. And if you're on the
15 WebEx app on your phone or computer, then it's
16 just a button to unmute yourself. And, at that
17 time, I will swear you in and ask you to spell
18 your last name, and ask you to go ahead and
19 make your comments to the Commission.

20 With that said, let's go ahead and we will
21 start our testimony portion of the evening.
22 The first name I have on my list is Amanda
23 Russell. Amanda Russell. And it's star six to
24 unmute.

25 MS. RUSSELL: Hi, can you hear me?

1 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Yes.

2 MS. RUSSELL: Hello.

3 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you.

4 Is this Ms. Russell?

5 MS. RUSSELL: Yes, it is.

6 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Yes, thank
7 you. And before we get started, would you go
8 ahead and please spell your last name for our
9 court reporter?

10 MS. RUSSELL: My last name is spelled
11 R-u-s-s-e-l-l.

12 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
13 ma'am. Now I'll go ahead and swear you in.

14 (Amanda Russell sworn.)

15 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you.
16 Go ahead and give us your comments.

17 MS. RUSSELL: I just had one question. I
18 tried to get in on the Q&A before the hearing,
19 but I just wanted to know like this doesn't
20 seem like the normal process to me. I just
21 wanted to know why the public, like, we didn't
22 have the hearing prior to all of the updates
23 and talk about it and then maybe make this
24 increase like increments instead of asking for
25 the 30 to 40 percent all at once, after they

1 made a bunch of improvements that, you know,
2 that hadn't been discussed with the public.
3 That's kind of -- I was just wondering why
4 the -- why -- why it's been allowed, I guess,
5 or why we're allowing for -- I mean, it feels
6 like we don't really have an option at this
7 point because the improvements have already
8 been made. Why wasn't this a hearing or
9 discussion prior to to the improvements being
10 done?

11 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Well, the
12 commissioners can't answer the questions
13 because they need to remain impartial because
14 the evidence is still being presented in this
15 case, so I'll try and answer what I can with
16 some broad strokes. But I would advise that
17 you might contact the Office of the Public
18 Counsel to discuss this further to get some
19 information or for contacting the staff counsel
20 for the staff or the Commission. But how this
21 is working is nothing has been decided yet. A
22 rate case operates very similar to a court
23 case. The company filed their request, and
24 then that starts an 11-month process of the
25 Commission reviewing, getting public input and

1 then culminating with an evidentiary hearing
2 and a decision by the commissioners. Now,
3 right now, we're very early in that process.
4 This is going to the public and asking for
5 their input at this point. Right now,
6 procedurally in the case, the company has filed
7 what we call their prefile direct testimony and
8 all the parties will end up having a total of
9 three rounds of expert testimony offered in
10 this case.

11 So, they only offered the very first step,
12 and I believe we've just, in the last few days,
13 had another round of testimony. So, nothing
14 has been decided yet. I don't know if that
15 might help -- help with understanding how the
16 process is working but --

17 MS. RUSSELL: Yes, I mean, I understand,
18 but I feel like -- I know the rate increase is
19 just proposed; and, you know, it's still being
20 decided; but I just feel like before they made
21 all, you know, this huge -- I just feel like
22 the 30 to 40 rate increase is a really large
23 increase; and I don't understand why it was a
24 discussion, the improvements wasn't a
25 discussion prior to asking for the increase and

1 then maybe, you know, over time do the increase
2 in smaller increments of asking for this larger
3 sum of money of people, you know, just five or
4 six years after last rate increase. So, I
5 mean, I just -- it feels kind of like it's a
6 very large increase --

7 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Ma'am,
8 there's no --

9 MS. RUSSELL: -- I'm new to the area also,
10 so it's not what I'm used to as far as whenever
11 it comes to like increases in your utility
12 bill.

13 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: I
14 understand. But, Ms. Russell, there is no
15 increase. There's a request for --

16 MS. RUSSELL: Not yet.

17 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: -- we're
18 only talking.

19 MS. RUSSELL: I agree with that. I
20 understand that.

21 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Okay.

22 MS. RUSSELL: That's kind of why I wanted
23 to get my question in before the Q&A, then you
24 guys said my name, so that was -- that was just
25 my question. So, I don't know. I understand

1 there's no increase that's been made yet. I
2 understand that it's all -- this is discussion,
3 and that was just my question, so.

4 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Okay, I
5 appreciate that. Thank you. If you have any
6 statement --

7 MS. RUSSELL: That's all I had. Sorry, I
8 didn't have anything else.

9 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Okay. Not
10 a problem. I understand. The next witness I
11 have on my list is Rebecca S., and this would
12 be Rebecca S. with a phone number ending in
13 5967. And I just want to remind you it's star
14 six to unmute.

15 MS. STEPHENS: Hello.

16 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Yes, hello.
17 Who is this?

18 MS. STEPHENS: This is Rebecca.

19 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Yes,
20 Rebecca, thank you very much. I am going to
21 need your last name for our court reporter.

22 MS. STEPHENS: S-t-e-p-h-e-n-s.

23 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
24 Ms. Stephens. Let me go ahead and swear you
25 in.

1 (Rebecca Stephens sworn.)

2 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
3 and please go ahead with your comments.

4 MS. STEPHENS: Okay. Well, I just want to
5 put on there for the record that I strongly
6 oppose this increase. My opinion, I think it's
7 worse than highway robbery. But I realize
8 there has not been a rate increase as of yet,
9 but every year the -- Liberty, and also
10 American Water, which I know you're not
11 discussing American Water, but those two
12 companies ask for a rate increase every year,
13 and I don't think it seems to matter how many
14 people oppose those increases; because it's not
15 like most of us out here are made out of money;
16 but they always seem to get everything they ask
17 for.

18 And I should go all the way back to 2011
19 after that tornado came through here and
20 devastated Joplin. People lost their lives,
21 their children, everything they had was totally
22 destroyed, and the electric company couldn't
23 wait to go on there and ask for a rate increase
24 because their insurance or whatever they have
25 didn't cover all their costs, and they had a

1 deductible to pay.

2 Well, did they think about all the people
3 that lost their homes and everything about the
4 deductible they had to pay or anything that
5 they lost? No. They were just concerned about
6 what they needed and not the lives lost or
7 anybody on -- the devastation that happened
8 here. They were just concerned about the money
9 coming out -- come out of the pocket to pay for
10 telephone poles or whatever.

11 So, no, I'm not -- I'm not pro for them
12 utility companies, Liberty, to get their
13 increase that they're asking for. This is just
14 way too much. You know, I just paid an
15 electric bill, July 1st. It went up to 142.06
16 on what I paid on July 1st. I just got a new
17 bill that's actually due the end of this month,
18 the 31st, and it's already gone up over a
19 hundred dollars. My new bill is already 200 --
20 I don't know what I did with it. Oh, here it
21 is. 200 -- well, \$247.38 up from that 142.06 I
22 just paid.

23 So, I don't know how in the heck they
24 expect people to keep forking out all of this
25 money, and there's got to be major money, and

1 putting money in their pockets. I'm sure
2 they're taking big raises. They need to have
3 cutbacks on their spending and what in the hell
4 they're doing. I mean, they're a business for
5 crying out loud. They should expect to have
6 these other things pop up just like a household
7 does.

8 They're a business. They need to start
9 paying their own stuff and quit expecting all
10 the people out here in these towns to have to
11 fork out all this money to cover their costs.
12 So --

13 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
14 Ms --

15 MS. STEPHENS: That's my gripe for today.

16 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you.
17 I appreciate you coming out tonight and telling
18 the Commission your comments.

19 MS. STEPHENS: Okay. Well, I'm not sure
20 it's going to do any good, but at least I got
21 it off of my chest and I'd like to thank you
22 for listening to me.

23 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Absolutely.
24 We'll move on. I don't have any other
25 preregistered witnesses on my list. So, I'll

1 open it up to participants that are here in
2 attendance on the WebEx. It is star six to
3 unmute yourself, and it will be a little bit
4 disorganized, because I can't see any of you
5 because I had to call due to some technical
6 difficulties. But what we'll try and do is
7 have everyone just speak up one at a time with
8 your name, and then I can go ahead and spell
9 your last name and swear you in and go from
10 there.

11 MR. BODINE: Hello.

12 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: If you're
13 on mute -- yes.

14 MR. BODINE: This is Tim Bodine. Last
15 name is spelled B-o-d-i-n-e.

16 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
17 Mr. Bodine, and let me go ahead and swear you
18 in.

19 (Tim Bodine sworn.)

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

23 MR. BODINE: Okay. Thank you for taking
24 my call. I was just reaffirming the other two
25 callers that have called in. I'm not in favor

1 of such an exorbitant rate increase, and as you
2 defined this, Judge, when you introduced this
3 to us, it's up to the Commission to decide if
4 these are just and reasonable rates; and I
5 think anyone looking at these -- this proposed
6 rate increase, it's neither just or reasonable.
7 I understand the costs that went into the
8 infrastructure changes, and some of those,
9 maybe all of those, needed to be done; but I'm
10 also in favor of considering what the customer
11 wants to do when they enter into these ideas of
12 wanting to make all of these changes; and it
13 needs to be something said -- that needs to be
14 discussed ahead of time in terms of dollars and
15 cents.

16 I do understand that they promoted it.
17 They told us what all the improvements that
18 they've made, but in the end, if the customers
19 can't pay for this, then what good is it to do
20 the improvements? So, it's not that they can't
21 be done, but maybe over -- over time these need
22 to be done. And I would say that goes along
23 with the rate increases. If there needs to be
24 rate increases, you know, we understand that.
25 We've all lived through rate increases, but

1 they had to be -- they have to be done over
2 time. And I think it's disingenuous to
3 customers to ask them and step up and carry
4 this heavy burden all at once, and there needs
5 to be a plan to recoup these costs over time.

6 I may also point out, you know, that
7 Liberty, in fact, is a subsidiary of a much
8 larger Canadian publically-traded corporation,
9 Algonquin Power & Utilities Corporation; and
10 some of burden needs to lie with the -- with
11 the parent company to assist being able to
12 temper this and make it easier for the
13 customers to digest all of this.

14 So, the bottom line is, I'm not in favor
15 of these because they are not just and
16 reasonable. Not that I'm in favor of any rate
17 increase, but what they're proposing here is
18 not just and reasonable. Thank you for taking
19 my call.

20 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
21 Mr. Bodine. I appreciate you calling in and
22 participating this evening. Do we have another
23 witness who would like to give their comments
24 to the Commission? It's star six --

25 MS. BEAUREGARD: Yes.

1 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: -- to
2 unmute. Yes, go ahead. Who's this?

3 MS. BEAUREGARD: This is Laurie
4 Beauregard. I tried to get in earlier, and I
5 don't know if we were having technical -- I
6 could hear everything but you guys could not
7 hear me. On the question side, but a lot of
8 them were bringing up the same issues that I
9 would like to be addressed; and I think Liberty
10 has failed extremely on that. The first lady
11 that had some questions regarding the area and
12 the income. There was a --

13 (Court reporter clarification.)

14 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
15 Ms. Beauregard, if I could interrupt for just a
16 moment. I think that was the court reporter,
17 can I help you?

18 (Court reporter clarification.)

19 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: No, she
20 sure didn't. I was going to let her go ahead
21 and testify and swear her at in the end, but
22 since we're here, we'll go ahead and do that
23 now. Thank you.

24 (Laurie Beauregard sworn.)

25 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Okay, sorry

1 about the interruption. Please go ahead.

2 MS. BEAUREGARD: Okay. As a very educated
3 background, so I'm not a dumb person when it
4 comes to know that a business cannot budget or
5 finance their money appropriately. There
6 should be a capital line budget for the large
7 budget items, like for infrastructure that
8 should already be planned out.

9 The second has to do with the first lady
10 that came on earlier in the -- in the earlier
11 session. And I was unable to get addressed,
12 but we have over an 80-plus percentage of the
13 population of this area, and that's being
14 probably very underestimated, is on a limited
15 or a very low income. And the mechanisms that
16 are there do not help probably 60 percent of
17 that population. So, if you can't pay your
18 bills, like the lady was asking earlier or
19 another member, they just shut you off. I will
20 tell you that plain and simple. They have no
21 qualms about it. They are after the almighty
22 dollar, which they cannot properly budget.

23 There's a monopoly as well as in this
24 area, which should not be tolerated. Because
25 we have no other option, other than going out

1 with the electricity for 12 months and trying
2 to find a different co-op to go to or going
3 full solar or whatever, which they are
4 increasingly making that more difficult for
5 people. I understand there's infrastructure
6 issues, but they need to be addressed in a
7 public manner in a budget that only should be
8 approved just by the Commission but it should
9 have some public input on that as well.

10 I would absolutely like to see proof of
11 their losses versus gains in the
12 administration's wages. And the other thing
13 that they said they did not bill for stuff that
14 was hours away from us that they had in Kansas,
15 because I live in the southwest Missouri, and
16 that is incorrect because I even called them on
17 it; and they wouldn't do anything about it. It
18 was for stuff that happened in Kansas, and
19 they've been billing me every month for, I
20 don't know how long, at least a year. I know
21 that much. I can go back and look.

22 But I'm billed for something that's not in
23 my area, and then being told I wasn't billed
24 when it is on my bill, and when I call, they
25 said, well, everyone -- it's just something

1 they're doing. I'm sorry, that's mismanagement
2 of funds but -- I think electricity has -- I've
3 lived in different states. This is the highest
4 electric place that I, or any of my relatives,
5 have ever been.

6 I've been in the service. I've been in
7 different states. I know what they run. This
8 is mismanagement, a monopoly, and I think it's
9 unfair not to take care of citizens that have a
10 limited or fixed income, which can't take the
11 30 or 40 percent. Mine just went up over the
12 last month or so, like that one lady was saying
13 \$100, mine goes up anywhere from 70 to \$100
14 every single time without a snag. So, I would
15 be looking more into the company, and seeing if
16 we get some other resources for the people in
17 this area, because we cannot tolerate this any
18 longer. Thank you.

19 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
20 Ms. Beauregard. I appreciate you calling in
21 and being with us tonight. So, do we have any
22 other -- do we have any other witnesses online
23 that would like to give their comments.

24 MR. PETERS: Yes, my name is Tim Peters.

25 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,

1 Mr. Peters. Let me get you sworn in.

2 (Tim Peters sworn.)

3 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you
4 and go ahead with your comments.

5 MR. PETERS: Okay. So, since the Public
6 Service Commission, PSC, is a governing entity
7 and approve this rate increase, it should be
8 said that they have a great responsibility on
9 the Commission to properly evaluate the
10 request, the Liberty Utilities increase
11 electric rates for thousands of Missouri
12 customers. The customers should be the number
13 one priority.

14 According to the last statute, Section
15 393150.2, any hearing that involves a rate
16 increase, the burden of proof is on the
17 electric company to prove, which they're, of
18 course, they usually do. As a captive customer
19 of Liberty Utility, I will respectfully use the
20 sources of information that PSC uses to
21 evaluate this request of Liberty Utilities, who
22 is a subsidiary of Algonquin based in Canada,
23 and while these independent sources are
24 comparing the rates in the same market area, I
25 know this was discussed earlier, and it's -- I

1 understand the other electrical rates of
2 comparable public utilities such as White
3 River, Ozark Electric, Springfield City, are
4 already lower than the current Liberty Utility
5 rates. Currently, Liberty Utility is asking
6 for a 30 to 40 percent increase, while the
7 rates are already higher than others in the
8 same market. If we could see the same
9 independent research data that PSC uses to make
10 this decision, than perhaps we could fully
11 evaluate it and understand the request better.

12 Liberty Utility states that it costs them
13 more to operate than others for various
14 reasons. Maybe other providers would be a
15 better option to provide electricity into the
16 customers versus Liberty. Liberty states it's
17 less expensive for them suppling service to
18 urban areas and maybe that's a better market
19 for them and maybe the rural market is not
20 where they need to be. Liberty represented at
21 Nixa and tonight, both said that they have
22 problems with shareholders and a 10 percent
23 annual return on their investment. In
24 addition, if they can't get that rate of
25 return, then they won't continue to invest.

1 If this were a company that is in a
2 competitive environment, therefore the company
3 should work to keep the quality of the cost of
4 products and services in check, but since it is
5 not -- it is necessary that a public utility
6 has an exclusive territory, which Liberty
7 Utility and White River actually was approved
8 in 2022, to have territories by definition,
9 it's a captive market. No competition. PSC
10 serves as that governing factor. Not open
11 market through competition. PSC, as appointed
12 by the governor, is a critical position of b
13 public trust.

14 Liberty Utilities, Algonquin, as the
15 parent company, and, basically, their priority
16 is to stockholders, not the citizens and
17 customers of Missouri through these meetings on
18 their own website. In a broader sense, it
19 should be recognized that a 30 to 40 increase
20 will have an inflationary affect on our local
21 economy, increasing the cost of goods and
22 services. It would have the same affect as a
23 tax increase would, but in this case, the
24 excess revenue will benefit a select few
25 investors, many of which own preferred stock in

1 a foreign country.

2 Again, since Liberty Utilities cannot
3 provided the affordable electricity service
4 based on the comments of thousands of people
5 who have spent their time and effort to
6 participate in these hearings, perhaps the PSC
7 should encourage other electrical providers,
8 who are currently providing more economical
9 service in the current Liberty Utility areas to
10 actually take over those areas. Maybe it's a
11 better economic fit for the customers, for
12 these other co-ops, and these other entities to
13 provided the service versus Liberty Utility.

14 We ask that PSC evaluate this price
15 increase based upon independent local market
16 comparison, not by what Canadian-based
17 Algonquin's stockholders expect as a return on
18 investment. And that's the end of my comment.

19 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
20 Mr. Peters. I appreciate you being here
21 tonight. And just to confirm, your last name
22 is spelled P-e--t-e-r-s; is that correct?

23 MR. PETERS: That is correct, and I'm in
24 the Nixa area --

25 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you.

1 Okay, I appreciate that.

2 MR. PETERS: Yes.

3 MR. GOSSETT: Judge, Tim Bodine has raised
4 his hand to testify. Tim Bodine.

5 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: I believe
6 Tim Bodine already testified.

7 MR. BODINE: I did. I did.

8 MR. PETERS: He did.

9 MR. GOSSETT: My apologies -- my apologies
10 for interrupting then, I just saw that come up
11 on my screen.

12 MR. PETERS: Yeah.

13 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Not a
14 problem. Hey, I appreciate the heads up.

15 MR. PETERS: And I appreciate his
16 testimony. I thought he did a good job, so.

17 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
18 I appreciate everyone's patience in bearing
19 with me while I made three different call-in
20 attempts. Do we have other any witnesses? It
21 is star six if you're on your phone and have
22 called in like I have. It's star six to
23 unmute.

24 MR. VOGT: Your Honor, I'd like to make a
25 comment.

1 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Yes, who is
2 this?

3 MR. VOGT: This is Rick Vogt. The last
4 name is spelled V-o-g-t.

5 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
6 Mr. Vogt. Let me go ahead and swear you in.

7 (Rick Vogt sworn.)

8 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
9 Mr. Vogt. Please go ahead with your comment.

10 MR. VOGT: So, I'd like to represent a
11 small little section of Liberty's coverage,
12 which is Cedar County. Cedar County has a
13 population of roughly 1,400 -- or 14,400
14 people. We have an average age of about 44,
15 and we have a high percentage of people over
16 65. The interesting statistic is our household
17 median income is around \$45,000.

18 If you look at a \$150 monthly electric
19 bill, that equates to about 3.95 percent of a
20 household income. With the increase Liberty is
21 looking for, it will raise that to roughly \$209
22 a month, which would be roughly 5.5 percent of
23 the household income. I feel like this
24 increase is very excessive for a one-time ask
25 moving forward, and I'd like to see the

1 Commission and also the Public Counsel work out
2 some arrangements to stagger these types of
3 increases over years, instead of massive hits
4 all at one time. And that is all I have to
5 comment on.

6 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you,
7 Mr. Vogt. I do appreciate you calling in and
8 participating tonight. Do we have anyone else
9 that would like to give their comments to the
10 Commission? If you called in, it is star six
11 to unmute. Or if you're on the app, you have a
12 button there that says Unmute. I'll give it
13 another 30 seconds or so, but if I don't have
14 another speaker, then I'll be going ahead and
15 ending our public hearing this evening. Again,
16 it's star six if you're on a phone to unmute.

17 MS. RIPPEE: Hi, yes, this is Samantha
18 Rippee. I'd like to give a comment.

19 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Yes,
20 Ms. Rippee. Can I ask you to spell your last
21 name first.

22 MS. RIPPEE: Yes, R-i-p-p-e-e.

23 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you
24 and let me swear you in.

25 (Samantha Rippee sworn.)

1 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Thank you.
2 Please go ahead.

3 MS. RIPPEE: So, I wanted to comment that
4 Liberty is a part of a larger conglomerate,
5 Algonquin. And we're comparing the rate
6 request increase as across all of their other
7 subsidiaries. It is exceptional. It's close
8 to that \$100 million mark, and the other groups
9 that they had don't even come close to touching
10 it. They have an operating profit that's
11 adjusted even -- of one billion dollars when
12 you round it up. It's just substantial.

13 While Liberty is working with smaller
14 operating margins about town, their parent
15 company is doing quite well. They saw a 50
16 million increase in electricity across all
17 their divisions. So, it's not necessarily that
18 their electric portion of their power supply,
19 which is doing well either. That isn't even to
20 speak some of their other areas.

21 Overall, they still have an increase in
22 profit year over year. If we're talking about
23 the impact to our citizens, we need to take
24 into account the cost of living in this area
25 and the impact to people here. I know

1 businesses are in place to make a profit, but
2 it's a large multinational organization. Are
3 we really going to make a detriment to local
4 citizens to make sure that individuals, you
5 know, who aren't even here, who are making
6 money, their paying dividend currently. You'll
7 note that not every publically traded company
8 pays the dividends. You do that when you're
9 doing really well. Are we going to allow, you
10 know, this sudden increase on the community
11 here to the benefit of a large organization.

12 We're not saying that they don't deserve
13 to get some more money back necessarily, but
14 the increase they're asking is just so
15 substantial, it will be a burden on the
16 community and to expect that it won't come back
17 on the community services to try to fill the
18 gap is, I would say, naive at best. The
19 community is going to be asked to try to fill
20 this gap, and that could be through medical
21 services for exposure to heat when people get
22 their power cut or the same kind of instance
23 that would go into the winter when it's too
24 cold.

25 So, I would ask the Commission to take

1 into account the impact on the larger community
2 and the health benefits that it will have for
3 the community and not pay this money out to a
4 large corporation instead. That's the end of
5 my comment.

6 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Okay.
7 Thank you. I appreciate you calling in and
8 giving us your comments tonight.

9 MS. RIPPEE: Thank you.

10 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: I'll open
11 the floor back up if anyone would like to give
12 their comments to the Commission on this case.
13 It's star six to unmute if you're on a phone.
14 I guess I should say it's star six to unmute if
15 you have called in on your phone's telephone
16 functions. Okay. Last call for witnesses, I'm
17 going to go ahead and end the hearing. All
18 right. I'd like to thank everybody for coming
19 out tonight. Are there any closing remarks
20 from the commissioners?

21 CHAIR HAHN: Yes, Judge. Chair Hahn on
22 behalf of all of the commissioners, we are
23 thankful that you took time out of your
24 evening, when you can be spending time with
25 your families, and we appreciate your comments

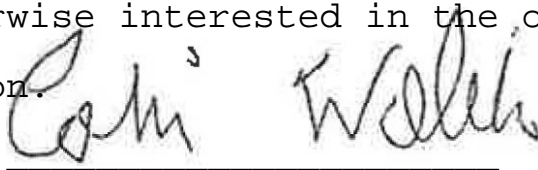
1 and facts. So, thanks for spending the time
2 tonight. Appreciate it.

3 REGULATORY LAW JUDGE HATCHER: Yes, I'd
4 like to echo those comments and also say thanks
5 to all of our participants and the
6 commissioners' patience, as well as all the
7 counsel for waiting for me to get my tech in
8 order.

9 I do appreciate everyone working on that.
10 If anyone knows of someone else that couldn't
11 be here tonight that would like to still make
12 comments, the Commission does accept written
13 comments, and you go to the Public Service
14 Commission's website, that is PSC.mo.gov.
15 Again, that is PSC.mo.gov. And in the upper
16 right hand corner of that website is a link
17 that's says Submit Comments. Just make sure to
18 put down this case number, and this case number
19 is ER-2024-0261. Again, the case number is
20 ER-2024-0261. I hope has everyone has a good
21 night. Thank you. We are adjourned, and we
22 are off the record.

23 (Ending time of the hearing: 8:11 p.m.)
24
25

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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\$	31st 12:18	6:23 12:2,3,5, 8 18:1,21 19:17 26:14, 19 28:14,22	19	also 2:22 9:9 11:9 15:10 16:6 27:1 31:4
\$100 20:13 28:8	360 4:6	393150.2 21:15	age 26:14	
\$150 26:18			agree 9:19	
\$209 26:21	4		ahead 4:18 5:18,20 6:8, 13,16 10:24 11:3 14:8,17, 21 15:14 17:2,20,22 18:1 21:4 26:6,9 27:14 28:2 30:17	always 11:16
\$247.38 12:21	40 6:25 8:22 20:11 22:6 23:19			amanda 5:22, 23 6:14
\$45,000 26:17	44 26:14			American 11:10,11
1	5			announce 5:10
1,400 26:13	5.5 26:22		Algonquin 16:9 21:22 23:14 28:5	annual 22:23
10 22:22	50 28:15		Algonquin's 24:17	another 8:13 16:22 18:19 27:13,14
11-month 7:24	5967 10:13			answer 2:6 7:12,15
12 19:1	6		all 3:4 4:23 6:22,25 8:8, 21 10:2,7 11:18,25 12:2,24 13:9, 11 15:9,12, 17,25 16:4,13 27:4 28:6,16 30:17,22 31:5,6	any 3:5 10:5 13:20,24 14:4 16:16 20:4, 17,21,22 21:15 25:20 30:19
14,400 26:13	60 18:16			anybody 12:7
142.06 12:15, 21	65 26:16			anyone 15:5 27:8 30:11 31:10
1st 12:15,16	65102 4:7			anything 10:8 12:4 19:17
2	7		allow 4:20 29:9	anywhere 20:13
200 4:6 12:19, 21	70 20:13		allowed 7:4	apologies 25:9
2011 11:18	7:32 2:2,6		allowing 7:5	apologize 2:17
2022 23:8	8		almighty 18:21	app 5:15 27:11
2025 2:5	80-plus 18:12		along 15:22	
23rd 2:5	8:11 31:23		already 4:12 7:7 12:18,19 18:8 22:4,7 25:6	
3	A			
3.95 26:19	able 16:11			
30 6:25 8:22 20:11 22:6 23:19 27:13	about 2:12	absolutely 13:23 19:10		
		accept 31:12		
		According 21:14		
		account 28:24 30:1		
		across 28:6, 16		
		actually 12:17 23:7 24:10		
		addition 22:24		
		address 4:5		
		addressed 17:9 18:11 19:6		
		adjourned 31:21		
		adjusted 28:11		
		administratio n's 19:12		
		advance 5:8		
		advise 7:16		
		affect 23:20, 22		
		affordable 24:3		
		after 6:25 9:4 11:19 18:21		
		again 2:4 24:2 27:15 31:15,		

appearance 3:21	24:14 26:24 27:20 29:25	basically 23:15	Bodine 14:11, 14,17,19,23 16:21 25:3,4, 6,7	C
appearing 4:10	asked 3:21 29:19	bearing 25:18	both 22:21	call 8:7 14:5, 24 16:19 19:24 30:16
appointed 23:11	asking 6:24 8:4,25 9:2 12:13 18:18 22:5 29:14	Beauregard 16:25 17:3,4, 15,24 18:2 20:20	bottom 16:14	call-in 25:19
appreciate 3:12,17 10:5 13:17 16:21 20:20 24:20 25:1,14,15,18 27:7 30:7,25 31:2,9	assist 16:11	because 3:15 7:7,13 11:14, 24 14:4,5 16:15 18:24 19:15,16 20:17	Box 4:6	called 14:25 19:16 25:22 27:10 30:15
appropriately 18:5	at 2:25 4:6 5:2,16 6:25 7:6 8:5 13:20 14:7 15:5 16:4 17:21 19:20 22:20 26:18 27:4 29:18	before 6:7,18 8:20 9:23	bringing 17:8	callers 14:25
approve 21:7	attempts 25:20	behalf 4:11 30:22	broad 7:16	calling 5:9 16:21 20:20 27:7 30:7
approved 19:8 23:7	attendance 14:2	believe 8:12 25:5	broader 23:18	came 11:19 18:10
area 9:9 17:11 18:13,24 19:23 20:17 21:24 24:24 28:24	attended 4:19	benefit 23:24 29:11	budget 18:4, 6,7,22 19:7	Canada 21:22
areas 22:18 24:9,10 28:20	authorities 4:16	benefits 30:2	Building 4:6	Canadian 16:8
around 26:17	average 26:14	best 29:18	bunch 7:1	Canadian- based 24:16
arrangements 27:2	away 19:14	better 22:11, 15,18 24:11	burden 16:4, 10 21:16 29:15	cannot 18:4, 22 20:17 24:2
as 3:25 4:23 5:7 9:10 11:8 15:1 18:2,23 19:9 21:18 22:2 23:10, 11,14,22 24:17 28:6 31:6	B	big 13:2	business 3:25 4:5 13:4,8 18:4	capital 18:6
ask 5:3,5,7, 17,18 11:12, 16,23 16:3	B-O-D-I-N-E 14:15	bill 9:12 12:15,17,19 19:13,24 26:19	businesses 29:1	captive 21:18 23:9
	back 11:18 19:21 29:13, 16 30:11	billed 19:22, 23	but 5:12 6:19 7:16,20 8:16, 18,20 9:14 11:7,9,11,16 13:20 14:6 15:9,18,21,25 16:17 17:6,7, 21 18:12 19:6,8,22 20:2 23:4,23 27:13 29:1,13	care 2:18 20:9
	background 18:3	billing 19:19	button 5:16 27:12	carry 16:3
	based 21:22 24:4,15	billion 28:11	by 2:20 8:2 19:8 23:8,12 24:16	Carter 3:23,24
		bills 18:18		case 2:12,14 3:14 4:16 7:15,22,23 8:6,10 23:23 30:12 31:18, 19
		bit 14:3		Cedar 26:12
				cents 15:15

Chair 3:1,8,20 30:21	comments 2:12 3:13 4:23,24 5:19 6:16 11:3 13:18 14:21 16:23 20:23 21:4 24:4 27:9 30:8,12, 25 31:4,12, 13,17	comparable 22:2	could 3:10 17:6,15 22:8, 10 29:20	cutbacks 13:3
changes 15:8, 12		comparing 21:24 28:5	couldn't 11:22 31:10	D
charged 2:19		comparison 24:16	counsel 4:9, 11 7:18,19 27:1 31:7	data 22:9
Charles 2:15		competition 23:9,11	country 24:1	days 8:12
check 23:4		competitive 23:2	County 26:12	decide 15:3
chest 13:21		computer 5:15	couple 5:8	decided 7:21 8:14,20
children 11:21	Commission 2:8,19,21,24 4:2,22 5:19 7:20,25 13:18 14:22 15:3 16:24 19:8 21:6,9 27:1, 10 29:25 30:12 31:12	concerned 12:5,8	course 21:18	decision 8:2 22:10
citizens 20:9 23:16 28:23 29:4	Commission's 31:14	confirm 24:21	court 6:9 7:22 10:21 17:13, 16,18	deductible 12:1,4
City 4:7 22:3	commissioner 3:2,3,5,7	conglomerate 28:4	courteous 5:6	defined 15:2
clarification 17:13,18	commissioner 3:2,3,5,7	connection 2:17	cover 11:25 13:11	definition 23:8
close 28:7,9	commissioner 3:2,3,5,7	considering 15:10	coverage 26:11	deserve 29:12
closing 30:19	commissioner 3:2,3,5,7	contact 7:17	critical 23:12	destroyed 11:22
co-op 19:2	commissioner s 2:11,25 3:1, 5 7:12 8:2 30:20,22	contacting 7:19	crying 13:5	detriment 29:3
co-ops 24:12	commissioner s' 31:6	continue 22:25	culminating 8:1	devastated 11:20
cold 29:24	community 29:10,16,17, 19 30:1,3	corner 31:16	current 22:4 24:9	devastation 12:7
Coleman 3:2	companies 2:20 11:12 12:12	corporation 16:8,9 30:4	currently 3:4 22:5 24:8 29:6	Diana 3:24
come 4:24 12:9 25:10 28:9 29:16	company 3:24 7:23 8:6 11:22 16:11 20:15 21:17 23:1,2,15 28:15 29:7	correct 24:22, 23	customer 15:10 21:18	different 5:12 19:2 20:3,7 25:19
comes 9:11 18:4		cost 23:3,21 28:24	customers 15:18 16:3,13 21:12 22:16 23:17 24:11	difficult 19:4
coming 3:18 12:9 13:17 30:18		costs 11:25 13:11 15:7 16:5 22:12	cut 29:22	difficulties 14:6
comment 24:18 25:25 26:9 27:5,18 28:3 30:5				digest 16:13
commenter 5:1				direct 8:7
				directly 3:16

discuss 7:18	21:25	ensure 2:20	evidentiary 8:1	feel 8:18,20, 21 26:23
discussed 7:2 15:14 21:25	early 8:3	enter 3:21 15:11	exceptional 28:7	feels 7:5 9:5
discussing 11:11	easier 16:12	entities 24:12	excess 23:24	few 8:12 23:24
discussion 7:9 8:24,25 10:2	echo 31:4	entity 21:6	excessive 26:24	filed 7:23 8:6
disingenuous 16:2	economic 24:11	environment 23:2	exclusive 23:6	fill 29:17,19
disorganized 14:4	economical 24:8	equates 26:19	exorbitant 15:1	finance 18:5
divide 2:8	economy 23:21	ER-2024-0261 2:14 31:19,20	expect 12:24 13:5 24:17 29:16	find 19:2
dividend 29:6	educated 18:2	Eric 4:4	expecting 13:9	finish 5:4
dividends 29:8	effort 24:5	evaluate 21:9, 21 22:11 24:14	expensive 22:17	first 5:9,22 8:11 17:10 18:9 27:21
divisions 28:17	either 28:19	even 19:16 28:9,11,19 29:5	expert 8:9	fit 24:11
doing 3:25 13:4 20:1 28:15,19 29:9	electric 3:24 11:22 12:15 20:4 21:11,17 22:3 26:18 28:18	evening 3:10, 11,23 4:3 5:21 16:22 27:15 30:24	exposure 29:21	five 2:24 9:3
dollar 18:22	electrical 22:1 24:7	ever 20:5	extremely 17:10	fixed 20:10
dollars 12:19 15:14 28:11	electricity 19:1 20:2 22:15 24:3 28:16	every 11:9,12 19:19 20:14 29:7	F	floor 30:11
done 7:10 15:9,21,22 16:1	else 10:8 27:8 31:10	everybody 30:18	fact 16:7	for 2:13,17 3:21,22,24 4:2,4,9,21 5:1 6:8,24 7:5,19, 20 8:4,25 9:2, 15 10:21 11:5,12,17,23 12:9,11,13 13:4,15,22 14:23 15:19 16:12,18 17:15 18:6,7 19:1,4,13,18, 19,22 20:16 21:11 22:6, 13,17,19 24:11 25:10 26:21,24 29:21 30:2, 16,18 31:1,7
down 31:18	Empire 3:24	everyone 3:9 5:5 14:7 19:25 31:9,20	factor 23:10	foreign 24:1
due 12:17 14:5	encourage 24:7	everyone's 5:6 25:18	facts 31:1	
dumb 18:3	end 5:2 8:8 12:17 15:18 17:21 24:18 30:4,17	everything 11:16,21 12:3 17:6	failed 17:10	
E	ending 10:12 27:15 31:23	evidence 7:14	fairly 4:19	
each 4:21 5:1			families 30:25	
earlier 17:4 18:10,18			far 9:10	
			favor 14:25 15:10 16:14, 16	

fork 13:11	14:8,9,17,21	Hahn 3:2,7,8	heavy 16:4	hundred
forking 12:24	17:2,20,22	30:21	heck 12:23	12:19
forward 26:25	18:1 19:2,21	hand 25:4	hell 13:3	<hr/>
four 3:4	21:4 26:6,9	31:16	hello 6:2	I
from 3:16	28:2 29:23	happened	10:15,16	ideas 15:11
12:21 14:9	30:17 31:13	12:7 19:18	14:11	if 4:17 5:13,14
19:14 20:13	goes 15:22	Hatcher 2:3,	help 8:15	8:14 10:5
30:20	20:13	15 3:7,19 4:1,	17:17 18:16	14:12 15:3,
full 19:3	going 5:11	8,14 6:1,3,6,	here 11:15,19	18,23 17:5,15
fully 22:10	8:4 10:20	12,15 7:11	12:8,20 13:10	18:17 20:15
functions	13:20 17:20	9:7,13,17,21	14:1 16:17	22:8,24 23:1
30:16	18:25 19:2	10:4,9,16,19,	17:22 24:20	25:21 26:18
funds 20:2	27:14 29:3,9,	23 11:2	28:25 29:5,11	27:10,11,13,
further 7:18	19 30:17	13:13,16,23	31:11	16 28:22
<hr/>	gone 12:18	14:12,16,20	Hey 25:14	30:11,13,14
G	good 3:23 4:3	16:20 17:1,	Hi 5:25 27:17	31:10
<hr/>	13:20 15:19	14,19,25	high 26:15	impact 28:23,
gains 19:11	25:16 31:20	20:19,25 21:3	higher 22:7	25 30:1
gap 29:18,20	goods 23:21	24:19,25	highest 20:3	impartial 7:13
get 2:4 3:15	GOSSETT	25:5,13,17	highway 11:7	important
6:7,18 7:18	25:3,9	26:1,5,8 27:6,	hits 27:3	3:14
9:23 11:16	got 12:16,25	19,23 28:1	homes 12:3	improvements
12:12 17:4	13:20	30:6,10 31:3	Honor 4:4	7:1,7,9 8:24
18:11 20:16	governing	having 4:25	25:24	15:17,20
21:1 22:24	21:6 23:10	8:8 17:5	hope 31:20	in 4:12,16 5:8,
29:13,21 31:7	governor 4:5	heads 25:14	Hopefully	17 6:13,18
getting 7:25	23:12	health 30:2	2:18	7:14 8:3,6,9,
give 6:16	great 21:8	hear 2:11 3:15	hours 19:14	12 9:2,11,23
16:23 20:23	gripe 13:15	4:23 5:25	household	10:12,25
27:9,12,18	groups 28:8	17:6,7	13:6 26:16,	12:23 13:1,3,
30:11	guess 7:4	hearing 2:2,4,	20,23	10 14:1,9,18,
giving 30:8	30:14	7,9,17 3:10	how 7:20 8:15	25 15:10,14,
Glenn 3:3	guys 9:24	4:18,19,25	11:13 12:23	18 16:7,14,
go 3:21 4:18	17:6	5:11 6:18,22	19:20	16,21 17:4,21
5:18,20 6:7,	<hr/>	7:8 8:1 21:15	huge 8:21	18:10,23
13,16 10:24	H	27:15 30:17		19:6,7,11,14,
11:3,18,23	<hr/>	31:23		15,18,22
	hadn't 7:2	hearings 2:8		20:3,6,16,20
		24:6		21:1,22,24
		heat 29:21		22:7,23 23:1,

4,8,18,23,25 24:6,9,23 25:18,22 26:6 27:7,10,24 28:16,21,24 29:1 30:7,15 31:7,15 include 3:1 income 17:12 18:15 20:10 26:17,20,23 incorrect 19:16 increase 2:13 6:24 8:18,22, 23,25 9:1,4,6, 15 10:1 11:6, 8,12,23 12:13 15:1,6 16:17 21:7,10,16 22:6 23:19,23 24:15 26:20, 24 28:6,16,21 29:10,14 increases 9:11 11:14 15:23,24,25 27:3 increasing 23:21 increasingly 19:4 increments 6:24 9:2 independent 21:23 22:9 24:15 individuals 29:4	inflationary 23:20 information 4:12 7:19 21:20 infrastructure 15:8 18:7 19:5 input 7:25 8:5 19:9 instance 29:22 instead 6:24 27:3 30:4 insurance 11:24 intently 3:17 interesting 26:16 interrupt 17:15 interrupting 25:10 interruption 18:1 intervening 4:15 into 2:8,9 15:7,11 20:15 22:15 28:24 29:23 30:1 introduce 4:17 introduced 15:2 invest 22:25 investment	22:23 24:18 investors 23:25 involves 21:15 issues 2:18 17:8 19:6 it 2:5 5:13 6:5, 23 7:5 8:23 9:5,11 11:13 12:15,20 13:21 14:1,2, 3 15:12,16,19 16:12 18:3,21 19:8,17,24 21:7 22:11,12 23:4,5,18,22 25:20 26:21 27:10,12 28:7,10,12 29:15,16 30:2 31:2 it's 3:15 5:11, 15,23 7:4 8:19 9:5,10 10:2,13 11:6, 14 12:18 13:20 15:3,6, 20 16:2,24 19:25 20:8 21:25 22:16 23:9 24:10 25:22 27:16 28:7,12,17 29:2,23 30:13,14 items 18:7	job 25:16 John 3:3 Joplin 11:20 judge 2:3,16 3:7,19,23 4:1, 8,14 6:1,3,6, 12,15 7:11 9:7,13,17,21 10:4,9,16,19, 23 11:2 13:13,16,23 14:12,16,20 15:2 16:20 17:1,14,19,25 20:19,25 21:3 24:19,25 25:3,5,13,17 26:1,5,8 27:6, 19,23 28:1 30:6,10,21 31:3 July 2:5 12:15,16 just 2:7,21 3:8,17 5:2,7, 16 6:17,19,20 7:3 8:12,19, 20,21 9:3,5, 24 10:3,13 11:4 12:5,8, 13,14,16,22 13:6 14:7,24 15:4,6 16:15, 18 17:15 18:19 19:8,25 20:11 24:21 25:10 28:12 29:14 31:17	19:14,18 Kayla 3:1 keep 12:24 23:3 kind 7:3 9:5, 22 29:22 know 3:10 5:3,12 6:19, 21 7:1 8:14, 18,19,21 9:1, 3,25 11:10 12:14,20,23 15:24 16:6 17:5 18:4 19:20 20:7 21:25 28:25 29:5,10 knows 31:10 Kolkmeier 3:3
				L
				lady 17:10 18:9,18 20:12 large 8:22 9:6 18:6 29:2,11 30:4 larger 9:2 16:8 28:4 30:1 last 5:18 6:8, 10 8:12 9:4 10:21 14:9,14 20:12 21:14 24:21 26:3 27:20 30:16 laurie 17:3,24 law 2:3,16
		J	K	
		Jefferson 4:7	Kansas	

3:19 4:1,8,14 6:1,3,6,12,15 7:11 9:7,13, 17,21 10:4,9, 16,19,23 11:2 13:13,16,23 14:12,16,20 16:20 17:1, 14,19,25 20:19,25 21:3 24:19,25 25:5,13,17 26:1,5,8 27:6, 19,23 28:1 30:6,10 31:3	18:7,18 19:10 20:12,23 25:22,24 26:10,23,25 27:9,18 30:11,18 31:4,11 limit 4:20,21 limited 18:14 20:10 line 16:14 18:6 lined 5:8 link 31:16 list 5:22 10:11 13:25 listening 3:17 13:22 little 5:12 14:3 26:11 live 19:15 lived 15:25 20:3 lives 11:20 12:6 living 28:24 local 2:9 3:9 23:20 24:15 29:3 long 19:20 longer 20:18 look 19:21 26:18 looking 15:5 20:15 26:21 losses 19:11	lost 11:20 12:3,5,6 lot 3:11 17:7 loud 13:5 low 18:15 lower 22:4 <hr/> M <hr/> ma'am 6:13 9:7 made 2:24 7:1,8 8:20 10:1 11:15 15:18 25:19 Madison 4:6 Maida 3:2 major 12:25 make 3:6 4:22 5:19 6:23 15:12 16:12 22:9 25:24 29:1,3,4 31:11,17 making 19:4 29:5 manner 19:7 many 11:13 23:25 margins 28:14 mark 28:8 market 21:24 22:8,18,19 23:9,11 24:15 massive 27:3	matter 11:13 maybe 6:23 9:1 15:9,21 22:14,18,19 24:10 me 3:4 5:25 6:20 10:24 13:22 14:17 17:7 19:19 21:1 25:19 26:6 27:24 31:7 mean 7:5 8:17 9:5 13:4 mechanisms 18:15 median 26:17 medical 29:20 meetings 23:17 member 18:19 million 28:8, 16 mine 20:11,13 minutes 5:1,2 mismanagem ent 20:1,8 Missouri 4:7 19:15 21:11 23:17 Mitchell 3:3 moment 3:1 17:16 money 9:3 11:15 12:8,25 13:1,11 18:5	29:6,13 30:3 monopoly 18:23 20:8 month 12:17 19:19 20:12 26:22 monthly 26:18 months 19:1 more 19:4 20:15 22:13 24:8 29:13 most 11:15 move 13:24 moving 26:25 Mr 4:3,10 14:11,14,17, 23 16:21 20:24 21:1,5 24:20,23 25:2,3,7,8,9, 12,15,24 26:3,6,9,10 27:7 Ms 3:23 5:25 6:2,4,5,10,17 8:17 9:9,14, 16,19,22 10:7,15,18, 22,24 11:4 13:14,15,19 16:25 17:3,15 18:2 20:20 27:17,20,22 28:3 30:9 much 10:20 12:14 16:7 19:21 multinational
--	--	--	--	---

29:2 mute 14:13 my 2:15,17 4:12 5:22 6:10 9:23,24, 25 10:3,11 11:6 12:19 13:15,21,25 14:24 16:19 19:23,24 20:4,24 24:18 25:9,11 30:5 31:7	neighbor's 4:24 neither 15:6 new 9:9 12:16,19 next 10:10 night 31:21 Nixa 22:21 24:24 no 9:8,14 10:1 12:5,11 17:19 18:20,25 23:9 none 4:18 normal 6:20 not 9:10,16 10:9 11:8,10, 14 12:6,11 13:19 14:25 15:20 16:14, 15,16,18 17:6 18:3,16,24 19:13,22 20:9 22:19 23:5, 10,16 24:16 25:13 28:17 29:7,12 30:3 note 29:7 nothing 7:21 8:13 now 3:20 5:5 6:13 8:2,3,5 17:23 number 2:14 4:15 10:12 21:12 31:18, 19	O occurred 2:7 of 2:2,6,18,22, 23,24 3:11,14 4:2,9,11,15, 23 5:2,7,8,21 6:22,24 7:1,3, 17,24 8:8,9, 13 9:2,3,5,22 11:8,15 12:9, 17,24 13:21 14:4 15:1,8,9, 10,11,12,14 16:7,10,13, 15,16 17:7 18:12,13,16 19:10 20:2,4, 9 21:11,16, 17,19,20,21, 22 22:1,24 23:3,12,17, 21,25 24:4,18 26:11,13,14, 15,19,22 27:2,3 28:4,6, 11,18,20,24 29:11,22 30:4,22,23 31:5,10,16,23 off 13:21 18:19 31:22 offer 4:16 offered 8:9,11 offering 3:13 Office 4:5,9, 11 7:17 on 2:4 3:18 4:11 5:9,13, 14,15,22 6:18	10:11 11:5,23 12:7,16 13:3, 24,25 14:2,13 17:7,10 18:10,14 19:9,16,24 21:8,16 22:23 23:17,20 24:4,17 25:11,21 27:5,11,16 29:10,15,17 30:1,12,13, 15,21 31:9 once 6:25 16:4 one 2:25 3:15 6:17 14:7 20:12 21:13 27:4 28:11 one-time 26:24 online 20:22 only 8:11 9:18 19:7 open 14:1 23:10 30:10 opening 3:6 operate 22:13 operates 7:22 operating 28:10,14 operations 2:23 opinion 11:6 opinions 5:6 opportunity 4:17	oppose 11:6, 14 option 7:6 18:25 22:15 order 31:8 organization 29:2,11 other 13:6,24 14:24 18:25 19:12 20:16, 22 22:1,14 24:7,12 25:20 28:6,8,20 others 22:7, 13 our 4:4 5:21 6:8 10:21 23:20 26:16 27:15 28:23 31:5 out 4:24 11:15 12:9,24 13:5, 10,11,17 16:6 18:8,25 27:1 30:3,19,23 over 9:1 12:18 15:21 16:1,5 18:12 20:11 24:10 26:15 27:3 28:22 Overall 28:21 overseeing 2:16 own 13:9 23:18,25 Ozark 22:3
---	--	--	--	---

P				Q
P-E--T-E-R-S 24:22	22:6,22 26:19,22	5:21 28:18	proof 19:10 21:16	Q&a 6:18 9:23
p.m. 2:2,6 31:23	percentage 18:12 26:15	portions 2:9	properly 18:22 21:9	quality 2:22 23:3
P.O. 4:6	perhaps 22:10 24:6	position 23:12	proposed 8:19 15:5	qualms 18:21
paid 12:14,16, 22	person 18:3	power 16:9 28:18 29:22	proposing 16:17	question 2:6 6:17 9:23,25 10:3 17:7
parent 16:11 23:15 28:14	Peters 20:24 21:1,2,5 24:20,23 25:2,8,12,15	preferred 23:25	prove 21:17	questions 7:12 17:11
part 3:13 28:4	phone 5:15 10:12 25:21 27:16 30:13	prefile 8:7	provide 22:15	quit 13:9
participants 14:1 31:5	phone's 30:15	preregistered 13:25	provided 24:3,13	quite 28:15
participate 24:6	place 20:4 29:1	presented 7:14	providers 22:14 24:7	
participating 16:22 27:8	plain 18:20	pressing 5:13	providing 24:8	R
parties 3:20 8:8	plan 16:5	price 24:14	PSC 21:6,20 22:9 23:9,11 24:6,14	R-I-P-P-E-E 27:22
patience 25:18 31:6	planned 18:8	prior 6:22 7:9 8:25	Psc.mo.gov. 31:14,15	R-U-S-S-E-L-L 6:11
pay 12:1,4,9 15:19 18:17 30:3	please 5:5 6:8 11:3 14:21 18:1 26:9 28:2	priority 21:13 23:15	public 2:9,20, 23 3:9,16 4:9, 11,12,25 6:21 7:2,17,25 8:4 19:7,9 21:5 22:2 23:5,13 27:1,15 31:13	raise 26:21
paying 13:9 29:6	pocket 12:9	pro 12:11	publically 29:7	raised 25:3
pays 29:8	pockets 13:1	probably 18:14,16	publically- traded 16:8	raises 13:2
pending 2:12	point 7:7 8:5 16:6	problem 10:10 25:14	put 11:5 31:18	rate 2:12,13 3:14 7:22 8:18,22 9:4 11:8,12,23 15:1,6,23,24, 25 16:16 21:7,15 22:24 28:5
people 9:3 11:14,20 12:2,24 13:10 19:5 20:16 24:4 26:14,15 28:25 29:21	poles 12:10	problems 22:22	putting 13:1	rates 2:19,21 15:4 21:11,24 22:1,5,7
percent 6:25 18:16 20:11	polite 5:5	process 3:14 6:20 7:24 8:3, 16		reaffirming 14:24
	pop 13:6	products 23:4		realize 11:7
	population 18:13,17 26:13	profit 28:10, 22 29:1		
	portion 2:6,10	promoted 15:16		

really 3:12 7:6 8:22 29:3,9	relatives 20:4	28:3 30:9	says 27:12 31:17	side 17:7
reason 4:21	remain 7:13	River 22:3 23:7	screen 25:11	similar 7:22
reasonable 2:21 15:4,6 16:16,18	remarks 30:19	robbery 11:7	second 2:10 3:8 18:9	simple 18:20
reasons 22:14	remind 10:13	roughly 26:13,21,22	seconds 27:13	since 5:11 17:22 21:5 23:4 24:2
rebecca 10:11,12,18, 20 11:1	reporter 6:9 10:21 17:13, 16,18	round 8:13 28:12	section 21:14 26:11	single 20:14
recognized 23:19	represent 26:10	rounds 8:9	see 14:4 19:10 22:8 26:25	six 5:14,23 9:4 10:14 14:2 16:24 25:21,22 27:10,16 30:13,14
record 2:5 3:22 4:13 11:5 31:22	represented 22:20	rural 22:19	seeing 20:15	small 26:11
recoup 16:5	request 2:13 7:23 9:15 21:10,21 22:11 28:6	Russell 5:23, 25 6:2,4,5,10, 14,17 8:17 9:9,14,16,19, 22 10:7	seem 6:20 11:16	smaller 9:2 28:13
regarding 17:11	research 22:9	<hr/> S <hr/>	seems 11:13	snag 20:14
regulate 2:19	resources 20:16	S-T-E-P-H-E- N-S 10:22	select 23:24	solar 19:3
regulates 2:22	respect 5:6	safety 2:23	sense 23:18	some 7:16,18 14:5 15:8 16:10 17:11 19:9 20:16 27:2 28:20 29:13
regulatory 2:3,16 3:19 4:1,8,14 6:1, 3,6,12,15 7:11 9:7,13, 17,21 10:4,9, 16,19,23 11:2 13:13,16,23 14:12,16,20 16:20 17:1, 14,19,25 20:19,25 21:3 24:19,25 25:5,13,17 26:1,5,8 27:6, 19,23 28:1 30:6,10 31:3	respectfully 21:19	said 5:20 9:24 15:13 19:13, 25 21:8 22:21	serve 23:10	someone 31:10
	responsibility 21:8	samantha 27:17,25	service 2:22 20:6 21:6 22:17 24:3,9, 13 31:13	something 15:13 19:22, 25
	restart 2:4	same 5:7 17:8 21:24 22:8 23:22 29:22	services 23:4, 22 29:17,21	sorry 10:7 17:25 20:1
	return 22:23, 25 24:17	saw 25:10 28:15	serving 3:4	sources 21:20,23
	revenue 23:24	say 15:22 29:18 30:14 31:4	session 18:11	southwest 19:15
	reviewing 7:25	saying 20:12 29:12	set 5:1	speak 14:7 28:20
	rick 26:3,7		shareholders 22:22	
	right 8:3,5 30:18 31:16		should 11:18 13:5 18:6,8, 24 19:7,8 21:7,12 23:3, 19 24:7 30:14	
	Rippee 27:17, 18,20,22,25		shut 18:19	

speaker 4:21 27:14	still 7:14 8:19 28:21 31:11	T	10,13	therefore 23:2
spell 5:17 6:8 14:8 27:20	stock 23:25	take 3:8 20:9, 10 24:10 28:23 29:25	thank 3:18,19 4:1,8,14 6:3, 6,12,15 10:5, 20,23 11:2 13:13,16,21 14:16,20,23 16:18,20 17:14,23 20:18,19,25 21:3 24:19,25 25:17 26:5,8 27:6,23 28:1 30:7,9,18 31:21	these 13:6,10 15:4,5,11,12, 21 16:5,15 21:23 23:17 24:6,12 27:2
spelled 6:10 14:15 24:22 26:4	stockholders 23:16 24:17	taken 2:18	thankful 30:23	they've 15:18 19:19
spending 3:12 13:3 30:24 31:1	Street 4:6	taking 13:2 14:23 16:18	thanks 31:1,4	thing 19:12
spent 24:5	strokes 7:16	talk 6:23	that's 7:3 9:22 10:1,7 12:17 13:15 18:13 19:22 20:1 22:18 24:18 28:10 30:4 31:17	things 3:11 13:6
Springfield 22:3	strongly 11:5	talking 9:18 28:22	them 3:21 4:16 5:7 12:11 16:3 17:8 19:16 22:12,17,19	think 11:6,13 12:2 15:5 16:2 17:9,16 20:2,8
staff 4:2,4 7:19,20	stuff 13:9 19:13,18	tax 23:23	themselves 4:17	this 2:12,13, 17 3:10,13,23 4:16,19 6:4, 19,23 7:6,8, 14,18,20 8:4, 5,10,21 9:2 10:2,11,17,18 11:6 12:13, 17,24 13:11 14:14 15:2,5, 19 16:4,12, 13,22 17:2,3 18:13,23 20:3,7,17 21:7,21,25 22:10 23:1,23 24:14 26:2,3, 23 27:15,17 28:24 29:10, 20 30:3,12 31:18
stagger 27:2	Submit 31:17	tech 31:7	then 5:11,15 6:23 7:24 8:1 9:1,23 14:8 15:19 19:23 22:25 25:10 27:14	those 2:20 5:9 11:11,14 15:8,9 24:10 31:4
star 5:13,23 10:13 14:2 16:24 25:21, 22 27:10,16 30:13,14	subsidiaries 28:7	technical 14:5 17:5	there's 9:8,15 10:1 12:25 18:23 19:5	
start 5:21 13:8	subsidiary 16:7 21:22	telephone 5:13 12:10 30:15		
started 6:7	substantial 28:12 29:15	tell 18:20		
starting 2:2	such 15:1 22:2	telling 13:17		
starts 7:24	sudden 29:10	temper 16:12		
statement 3:6 10:6	sum 9:3	terms 15:14		
states 20:3,7 22:12,16	suppling 22:17	territories 23:8		
statistic 26:16	supply 28:18	territory 23:6		
statute 21:14	sure 3:7 4:22 13:1,19 17:20 29:4 31:17	testified 25:6		
step 8:11 16:3	swear 5:17 6:13 10:24 14:9,17 17:21 26:6 27:24	testify 17:21 25:4		
Stephens 10:15,18,22, 24 11:1,4 13:15,19	sworn 6:14 11:1 14:19 17:24 21:1,2 26:7 27:25	testimonial 2:10		
		testimony 5:21 8:7,9,13 25:16		
		than 11:7 18:25 22:4,7,		

thought 5:4 25:16	16:1,2,3,5,10, 11,13,23,24 17:1,4,9,20 18:4,9,11 19:2,6,10 20:9,13,23 21:9,14,17,20 22:6,9,13,15, 17,20,25 23:3,8,16,19 24:5,9,12,21 25:4,22,24 26:10,19,21, 25 27:2,4,9, 11,16,18,20 28:3,8,9,19, 23,25 29:1,3, 4,9,11,13,16, 17,19,21,25 30:3,11,12, 13,14,17,18 31:4,5,7,11, 13,17	total 8:8 totally 11:21 touching 28:9 town 28:14 towns 13:10 traded 29:7 tried 6:18 17:4 trust 23:13 try 7:15 14:6 29:17,19 trying 19:1 turn 3:20 two 2:9 11:11 14:24 types 27:2	up 2:24 5:3 8:8 12:15,18, 21 13:6 14:1, 7 15:3 16:3 17:8 20:11,13 25:10,14 28:12 30:11 updates 6:22 upon 24:15 upper 31:15 urban 22:18 us 3:13 6:16 11:15 15:3,17 19:14 20:21 30:8 use 21:19 used 9:10 uses 21:20 22:9 usually 21:18 utilities 2:23 16:9 21:10,21 22:2 23:14 24:2 utility 2:20 9:11 12:12 21:19 22:4,5, 12 23:5,7 24:9,13	versus 19:11 22:16 24:13 very 3:14 7:22 8:3,11 9:6 10:20 18:2, 14,15 26:24 Vogt 25:24 26:3,6,7,9,10 27:7 <hr/> W <hr/> wages 19:12 wait 11:23 waiting 31:7 want 3:8 10:13 11:4 wanted 6:19, 21 9:22 28:3 wanting 15:12 wants 15:11 Water 11:10, 11 way 11:18 12:14 we 3:10,12, 15,16 4:15, 20,21 5:7,20 6:7,21 7:6 8:7 15:24 16:22 17:5 18:12,25 20:16,17,21, 22 22:8,10 24:14 25:20 26:14,15 27:8 28:23 29:3,9 30:22,25 31:21
tim 14:14,19 20:24 21:2 25:3,4,6		<hr/> U <hr/> unable 18:11 underestimate d 18:14 understand 8:17,23 9:14, 20,25 10:2,10 15:7,16,24 19:5 22:1,11 understandin g 8:15 unfair 20:9 unmute 5:14, 16,24 10:14 14:3 17:2 25:23 27:11, 12,16 30:13, 14	<hr/> V <hr/> V-O-G-T 26:4 vacancy 2:25 Vandergriff 4:3,4 various 22:13	
time 2:2,5 3:12 4:20,22 5:3,17 9:1 14:7 15:14,21 16:2,5 20:14 24:5 27:4 30:23,24 31:1,23	today 3:4 13:15 told 15:17 19:23 tolerate 20:17 tolerated 18:24 tonight 3:13, 18 13:17 20:21 22:21 24:21 27:8 30:8,19 31:2, 11	timer 5:1 times 3:11 to 2:20 3:5,8, 9,15,20,21 4:17,20,24 5:3,12,14,16, 17,18,19,23 6:18,19,20, 21,22,25 7:9, 13,18,22 8:4, 22,25 9:9,10, 11,23 10:13, 14,20 11:4, 13,16,18,23 12:1,4,9,12, 15,24,25 13:2,5,8,10, 11,20,21,22 14:1,2,5,21 15:3,9,11,12, 13,19,22,23		
three 5:1,2 8:9 25:19	too 12:14 29:23 took 30:23 tornado 11:19			
through 11:19 15:25 23:11, 17 29:20				
thousands 21:11 24:4				
thought 5:4 25:16				

<p>we'll 2:3 3:20 13:24 14:6 17:22</p> <p>we're 7:5 8:3 9:17 17:22 28:5,22 29:12</p> <p>we've 8:12 15:25</p> <p>Webex 5:11, 15 14:2</p> <p>website 23:18 31:14,16</p> <p>welcome 3:9</p> <p>well 4:19,23 7:11 11:4 12:2,21 13:19 18:23 19:9,25 28:15,19 29:9 31:6</p> <p>went 12:15 15:7 20:11</p> <p>what 2:7 5:10 7:15 8:7 9:10 12:6,16,20 13:3 14:6 15:10,17,19 16:17 20:7 24:16</p> <p>whatever 11:24 12:10 19:3</p> <p>when 15:2,11 18:3 19:24 28:11 29:8, 21,23 30:24</p> <p>whenever 9:10</p> <p>where 2:11 3:15 22:20</p>	<p>which 2:11 11:10 18:22, 24 19:3 20:10 21:17 23:6,25 26:12,22 28:19</p> <p>while 21:23 22:6 25:19 28:13</p> <p>White 22:2 23:7</p> <p>who 4:24 10:17 16:23 21:21 24:5,8 26:1 29:5</p> <p>Who's 17:2</p> <p>why 6:21 7:3, 4,5,8 8:23 9:22</p> <p>will 2:11,16 3:16 4:25 5:2, 9,10,17,20 8:8 14:3 18:19 21:19 23:20,24 26:21 29:15 30:2</p> <p>Williams 4:10</p> <p>winter 29:23</p> <p>with 3:4,11 5:20 7:2,15 8:1,15 9:19 10:12 11:3 12:20 14:7,21 15:23 16:10 18:9 19:1 20:21 21:4 22:22 25:19 26:9,20 28:13 30:24</p>	<p>without 20:14</p> <p>witness 10:10 16:23</p> <p>witnesses 5:9 13:25 20:22 25:20 30:16</p> <p>won't 22:25 29:16</p> <p>wondering 7:3</p> <p>work 23:3 27:1</p> <p>working 7:21 8:16 28:13 31:9</p> <p>worse 11:7</p> <p>would 3:5 4:16,18 5:5,7 6:7 7:16 10:11 15:22 16:23 17:9 19:10 20:14, 23 22:14 23:22,23 26:22 27:9 29:18,23,25 30:11 31:11</p> <p>wouldn't 19:17</p> <p>written 31:12</p> <hr/> <p>Y</p> <hr/> <p>Yeah 25:12</p> <p>year 11:9,12 19:20 28:22</p> <p>years 9:4 27:3</p> <p>yes 6:1,5,6</p>	<p>8:17 10:16,19 14:13 16:25 17:2 20:24 25:2 26:1 27:17,19,22 30:21 31:3</p> <p>yet 7:21 8:14 9:16 10:1 11:8</p> <p>yourself 5:14, 16 14:3</p>
--	---	--	--