I would like to have explained what EA-2500-0229 is? Is this a request for approval to build a new power plant paid for by the customers of Empire District Electric (Senate bill 4 passed last year). I am questioning whether the public had an adequate opportunity to address concerns via the virtual public hearing that was held on 4/19/2026. Why was there not a "live" public meeting say at Missouri Southern where face to face discussions could be addressed. I did listen to the question and answer session and I felt there were some questions that were not answered. If this is because there is a law on record (SB4) then maybe public opinion is a mute point. Ok, it is obvious that Missouri needs more power generation capabilities, but is a new power plant the only option? One question was about the Wichita transmission project (I think maybe Evergy) is connected with. Not sure what this is, but it was not explained or answered adequately. Another person asked whether this project was within 50 miles of tribal lands. (Federal Law governs based on AI query approved by Supreme Court) Should they be notified. Answer that I heard was not at this time. Part of the request/justification for this was that SPP made change to requirements of base power generation if I am understanding. OK question? FERC regulates the SPP across 13 states including Missouri (Investor owned as well as public). During mass Blackouts in the winter storm URI as part of the securitization bonds of storm URI Empire/Liberty had to bite the bullet and pay exuberant costs. Was this cost passed onto other utility companies in Missouri/or any of the other 13 states?

I remember when the securitization bonds for decommissioning Asbury were approved by the PSC (Electricity Bill Reduction Assistance Act (HB734/SB202) in 2021) that I contacted the PSC and was told it was a done deal, so that is why I am questioning what is going on with this SB4 hearing. Are all options being considered? To be fair I have not read all of the SB4 stipulations, but what percentage of the cost are the customers going to have to cover? Doesn't the company have some responsibility for cost of generation? In some of my research and I can't put my finger on it today I saw a place where Liberty was asking for an amendment to some of the cost that was associated with securitization bonds. I think it was about a credit about allowed for customer credits. I think the article stated Liberty's credit was for $4.7 million and the PSC was figuring $14.4 million due to some updates that had been made at Asbury that would have made it operational until 2035. Why decommission one plant (granted coal burning) to now be asking for new natural gas plant. What was the cost or if even feasible to convert turbines to gas?

Who paid for the North Fork River Wind farm owned by Empire (Liberty)? Was the cost passed on to customers? Does Empire/Liberty have two sets of books as I've heard mentioned in public meetings? The taxes in Jasper county for example for parcels related to the wind turbines are in Empire District Electric. In Lawrence County there are tax records for both Empire District Electric and Liberty. Is this because when Algonquin Power & Utilities Corp (allowed by NAFTA changes??) purchased Empire (I don't understand full merger sale surviving company EM-2016-

0213/AO-2020-0184) . On this same note if there is financial gain from EA-2025-0209 provided Empire/Liberty receives federal funding would the customers receive any compensation on rate cases?

https://missouriindependent.com/2026/04/23/is-competition-the-answer-to-missouris-growing-utility-costs/

Late last month, both chambers of the Missouri legislature began hearings on proposals to introduce electrical choice and competition, challenging the state's long-standing model of electricity generation and delivery. At the core of the debate is a basic economic principle: competition tends to put downward pressure on costs.

Currently, because we cannot reasonably expect multiple sets of power lines running through neighborhoods to enable consumers to choose between providers, electricity markets like Missouri's remain structured as regulated monopolies. Nonetheless, Missouri ratepayers have faced steadily rising electricity costs, outpacing inflation and wage growth in recent years. These costs are absorbed by families, farms, and manufacturers across the state.

Through the Electrical Choice and Competition Act, Missouri lawmakers seek to address these concerns. The legislation attempts to balance the benefits of competition with the realities of natural monopoly through unbundling. Transmission and distribution, the wires and power lines that deliver electricity to homes and businesses, would remain regulated monopolies.

Electricity generation, which is far less constrained by natural monopoly characteristics, would be opened to competition. Utilities would provide equal and open access to their grids, allowing competing suppliers to sell electricity using existing infrastructure while compensating utilities for its use.

This approach has been adopted by several other states, from New York and Illinois to Texas. The evidence shows that competitive states saw a fraction of Missouri's rate increases over the same period and built more generation capacity, all while private capital bore the risk rather

than ratepayers. When competition replaces guaranteed returns, the market builds more and charges less.

The legislation also offers a direct alternative to Senate Bill 4, signed into law in April 2025, which allows utilities to charge ratepayers for infrastructure before it produces electricity, with limited penalties and no cost cap. Georgia and South Carolina ratepayers learned this lesson, paying $44 billion combined for plants that came online years late or never at all.

Some critics point to Texas' energy failures during Winter Storm Uri in 2021 as evidence that competitive markets cannot be trusted. But these failures were driven by inadequate weatherization mandates, an issue tied more to Texas' regulatory structure than its ownership model. During Uri, most Texas residential customers were on fixed-rate plans and saw their bills rise only 7% on average. Uri is not an argument against competition; it is an argument for getting the consumer protection design right.

The Electrical Choice and Competition Act does exactly that. Its default service tier structure shields residential and small business customers from wholesale price exposure until the market is established, keeping them on fixed rates until at least 50% of residential electricity use has shifted to competitive suppliers.

By contrast, under Missouri's current system, the Fuel Adjustment Clause allows utilities to pass unexpected cost increases, such as a winter storm, onto customers. Under the proposed Electrical Choice and Competition Act, suppliers offering fixed contracts must absorb those risks, even if wholesale prices rise. Risk shifts from ratepayers to the firms that choose to take it on.

Additional protections target vulnerable consumers. Low-income customers would be enrolled in a program where suppliers must offer rates at or below the default service price. Suppliers must obtain a Public Service Commission license, post a $500,000 surety bond (like a security deposit), complete consumer protection training, and face penalties of up to $100,000 per violation.

These bills represent the most significant opportunity in a generation to fix Missouri's broken electricity market. The Electrical Choice and Competition Act aligns investment risk with investment decisions, introduces competitive discipline, and protects consumers through a structured transition with enforceable safeguards. It does so while aligning with the market-oriented principles Missouri's Republican majority tends to support.

To deliver on that promise fully, the legislature should make a few targeted improvements before passage. Auctions that set default electricity prices should require enough bidders to ensure genuine competition. Low-income customers who choose to leave the assistance program should not lose their benefits as a penalty for doing so. Residential customers should have a temporary price cap during the transition, giving the market time to mature before they

face its full risks. And the Public Service Commission needs adequate funding to referee the new market effectively.

Missouri ratepayers have absorbed above-average rate increases for nearly two decades under a monopoly structure that has built almost nothing in return. Senate Bill 4 has made the status quo worse. The question is no longer whether competition can work in Missouri, but whether Missourians can afford to continue without it.