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2	National Grid for	Electric Service, 24-E-0322 and 24-
3		G-0323
4		STATE OF NEW YORK
5	PUE	BLIC SERVICE COMMISSION
6	CASE 24-E-0322; 2	24-G-0323 - In the Matter of Niagara
7	Mohawk Corporatio	on d/b/a National Grid for Electric
8	Service and Niaga	ra Mohawk Corporation d/b/a National
9	Grid for Gas Serv	rice
10	PU	BLIC STATEMENT HEARING
11	DATE:	SEPTEMBER 17, 2024
12	LOCATION:	Albany Public Library
13		161 Washington Avenue
14		Albany, New York 12210
15	BEFORE:	ALJ ANTHONY BELSITO
16		ALJ MICHAEL CLARKE
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19		
20	Reported by Barri	ngton Moxie
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4	(The hearing commenced at 5:59 p.m.)
5	A.L.J. BELSITO: I call case 20
6	cases 24-E-0322, proceeding on motion of the
7	Commission as to the rates, charges, rules, and
8	regulations of Niagara Mohawk Power Corporation,
9	doing business as National Grid for Electric Service,
10	and 24-G-0323 proceeding on motion of the Commission
11	as to the rates, charges, rules, and regulations of
12	Niagara Mohawk Power Corporation doing business as
13	National Grid for Gas Service.
14	Good evening and welcome. We are here
15	today for a public statement hearing that was noticed
16	on August 26th, 2024. This public statement hearing
17	concerns the proposed changes in the electric and gas
18	delivery rates and practices of National Grid.
19	National Grid filed amendments to its electric and
20	gas tariff schedules on May 28th, 2024, proposing to
21	increase its annual electric and gas delivery
22	revenues effective April 1st, 2025. More
23	specifically, National Grid seeks to increase its
24	electric delivery revenues by approximately \$525
25	million, representing a 20 percent increase in base

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4	delivery revenues, or an 11 percent increase in total
5	revenues, and its gas delivery revenues by
6	approximately 148 million, representing a 28 percent
7	increase in base delivery revenues, or a 15 percent
8	increase in total revenues. These increases would
9	result in total monthly bill increases for the
10	average residential customer of approximately \$18.92,
11	or 15 percent for electric, and \$18.34 for gas, or 20
12	percent.
13	The rate request filing states that
14	the company is focused on three priorities. Number
15	one, continuing to deliver safe, reliable energy
16	service to its customers; enabling customers to
17	affordably meet their energy needs while improving
18	customer service; and three, supporting the goals of
19	the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act.
20	My name is Anthony Belsito. I'm an
21	administrative law judge for the Department of Public
22	Service. With me tonight is Administrative Law Judge
23	Michael Clarke. We are presiding over the hearings
24	in this case and the development of the record on
25	behalf of the New York State Public Service

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Commission.

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At the conclusion of our process, we will make recommendations to the Commission, which is the ultimate decisionmaker in this case. The Commission, in making its decision, must consider a utility's proposal and may adopt or reject in whole or in part or modify it. The Public Service Commission will decide what the company's terms and conditions of service will be. The Public Service Commission has seven members: the Chairperson, Rory Christian, and six Commissioners, James Alesi, David Valesky, John Maggiore, Uchenna Bright, Denise Sheehan, and Radina Valova.

The purpose of today's hearing is to provide you with an opportunity to tell the Commission your thoughts on the company's rate filings. Statements made today will become part of the case record. We have a court reporter with us today who will prepare a transcript of the hearing, which will be included in the official record of this proceeding, so that your comments can be considered by all members of the Commission. When it is ready,

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4	the transcript will be available for view on the
5	Department of Public Service website.
6	Today's hearing is not a question-and-
7	answer session, but a forum to hear comments from
8	you. However, if you have any questions,
9	representatives from National Grid are here with us
10	today. They're in the back row to my left, to your
11	right, to discuss any matters with you about the
12	rates or your utility service. I just do ask that,
13	if you do have questions for them during the hearing,
14	please just step outside as to not interrupt the
15	speakers.
16	Please note that if you do not wish to
17	speak at today's hearing but you would like your
18	views included in the record, there are other ways to
19	comment. These are listed in the public notice for
20	today's event. You can do so by submitting comments
21	on the department's website, by regular mail, or by
22	phone. Regardless of how the comments are submitted,
23	they will be given equal consideration. Comments may

25 pendency of this proceeding. For those of you that

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be submitted and will be considered throughout the

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4	would like to make a statement here today, please
5	fill out a registration card. They are available at
6	the back table with our Department of Public Service
7	Outreach staff, and I will call speakers up one by
8	one using the cards.
9	Please speak slowly and clearly so
10	that the court reporter can accurately capture your
11	statement for the record. To the extent you have a
12	lengthy written statement, please summarize your
13	statement orally and submit the full written
14	statement by email or mail. Generally, we will
15	not we have a deadline of 9:00 today. And we
16	do we have maybe fifteen speakers. So I generally
17	will ask you to keep your comments to about three
18	minutes. We will not set a timer and hold anyone to
19	that regard, but we do want to make sure we get
20	through all the comments before the library staff has
21	to go home.
22	Please he respectful to today!s

Please be respectful to today's speakers. We recognize that there may be differing viewpoints, but this event is being held so that we can hear from everyone who would like to make a

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4	statement on the record. Please do not interrupt the
5	speakers or these proceedings, and please make sure
6	to sign silence your cell phone. Our first
7	speaker is Ann Erling.
8	MS. ERLING: Do we go on and stand
9	over there?
10	A.L.J. BELSITO: Yes, please.
11	MS. ERLING: Good evening. I'm Ann
12	Erling, a resident of Albany. I'm laser-focused on
13	the climate crisis and our need to stop burning
14	fossil fuels. Everyone, including National Grid and
15	its regulators, need to be laser-focused on that,
16	too.
17	Three things trouble me most about
18	this rate increase request. I understand the request
19	includes plans for \$39 million of spending for new
20	gas hookups. Anyone considering a new gas hookup at
21	this critical phase of the climate crisis is woefully
22	misinformed. Customers purchasing a new gas-powered
23	appliance today will find themselves saddled with an
24	albatross of old technology requiring reliance on an
25	old, costly energy source, and we together will

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suffer the consequences of the uptick in emissions contributed by those appliances. Given the gravity of our climate predicament, it is gross negligence now to continue pursuing new gas hookups. National Grid must do better, and regulators must ensure that they do.

Number two, I understand that National Grid's proposal includes overall plans to invest \$1.9 billion in upgrades to the gas system, this at a time when both the demands of the climate crisis and the demands of New York's climate law require that we retire that very system. Instead of building a shiny set of pipelines to shackle us to dirty gas for decades, National Grid should ramp up investment in the clean energy system that will power our future. Any pipeline work not directly focused on closing active leaks needs to be scrutinized against the guidelines of the State's scoping plan. Recent reports have shown the State woefully behind on work needed to reach our climate law goals. We must not set ourselves further back by agreeing to this proposal. National Grid must do better, and

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4	regulators must ensure that they do.

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Finally, number three, I'm troubled by the profits this plan funnels to investors and top National Grid management. I understand that the National Grid CEO is paid over \$8 million in -- a year in salary and bonuses, and the company is requesting a quaranteed 10 percent rate of return on capital expenditures. This funneling of profits to a wealthy minority is inappropriate for an entity that we all, many of limited income, pay for and which functions as a monopoly. The climate crisis requires public expenditures to be directed to the essential transition away from fossil fuels, not frittered away into the pockets of the wealthy. If National Grid is kept from investing so many of our funds into the gas network and from funneling so many of our funds to private pockets, it will be able to reduce costs that it's asking to pass along to us upstate ratepayers. National Grid must do better, and regulators must ensure that they do.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these public comments.

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4	A.L.J. BELSITO: Thank you. Our next
5	speaker is Bob Cohen.
6	MR. COHEN: Good evening. As you
7	said, my name is Bob Cohen. I am an attorney with
8	Citizen Action of New York, which is a multi-issue
9	organization membership organization with members
10	in throughout New York State in the National Grid
11	upstate rate territory. We have chapters in the
12	here in the Capital District, in Central New York,
13	which means Syracuse, and Utica, and Buffalo.
14	Thousands of our members and supporters who are
15	ratepay are ratepayers in the upstate service
16	territories of National Grid, and a large percentage
17	of our members are low- and moderate-income people.
18	We have intervened in this case and will file
19	testimony in the coming weeks, as we did in the last
20	three-year upstate rate case. However, tonight I'd
21	like to highlight a few key points we'll address in
22	our testimony.
23	First, the proposed rate increases are
24	enormous and unjustified. The company's rate
25	proposals are certain to be unaffordable for many

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4	low-income and moderate-income residents. The
5	monthly charges that Judge Belsito suggested laid
6	out amount to over \$400 a year for a customer that
7	has electric and gas, which is obviously a huge
8	amount of money for somebody, say, making 30, 35,000
9	a year, which so many people in Upstate New York make
10	who are at the minimum wage level or just above.
11	The reality is that Upstate New
12	Yorkers are struggling. Nearly 16 percent of
13	National Grid customers are facing energy debt
14	burdens at an average of \$1,362, and 11,714 people
15	had their service terminated in June 2024 alone.
16	This is all while National Grid has filed a request
17	for a whopping guaranteed 10 percent rate of return
18	on its capital expenditures in a market which has
19	already as the last speaker already said
20	substantially has a monopoly. I wish I could get a
21	guaranteed 10 percent rate of return on my retirement
22	account.
23	At a minimum, the Commission must
24	carefully examine each and every significant proposed
25	expenditure to determine if it is justified and not

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take the company at its word that is -- it is prudent and necessary. And the -- and the PSC should certainly consider mandating that any permitted rate increase be in steps to cushion the rate shock of proposed -- the proposed double-digit percentage increases on customers.

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Second, the Commission must, in its examination of the rate increase, take seriously its responsibility under Section 7 and 8 of the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act, or the CC --CLCPA, which is, of course, our state's landmark climate law, and force the company to aggressively reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to meet the CLCPA greenhouse gas emission targets. The statutory language makes it clear that this is a legal obligation on the part of the Commission, equally as important as the Commission's obligation to provide safe and adequate service. And I do have to say that sometimes in the PSA (sic) documents, including joint orders, they've acted as if safe and adequate service is somehow a predominant requirement; it came first. I learned in law school when you harmonize -- when a

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later statute, then the later statute, generally speaking, prevails over the earlier statute. So I don't know why the Public Service Commission has the interpretation that -- obviously we want our lights on, but it -- it's simply not true that safe and adequate service predominates over the CLCPA requirements. The legislature should be assumed to have understood that it was amending the public service law. So that's how the -- in our opinion, the PSC should interpret the law to harmonize those two statutes.

It's clear that National Grid's rate proposal does not adequately address the climate crisis. The amount the company is seeking, as has already been said, includes more than \$1.9 billion in upgrades to the gas system that causes climate change, including, as already been said, \$39 million for new gas hookups and more than 800 million to replace 145 miles of pipeline. Further, more than 30 million is proposed for utilization of so-called renewable natural gas, which is known by every climate advocate as a false solution to climate

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4	change. Quite simply, renewable natural gas is not
5	renewable, and there's no evidence that renewable
6	natural gas redu drives down emissions. National
7	Grid should be retiring the gas infrastructure, not
8	extending it to address climate change. As Ms.
9	Erling said before me, nobody denies that some
10	repairs are necessary while the company retires its
11	gas and structure, but it defies belief that the
12	entirety of the \$1.9 billion is necessary to prevent
13	either imminent risk of harm to the public from gas
14	explosions to reduce methane to reduce methane
15	leakage.
16	Further, as announced in their rate
17	filing, the company is targeting electrifying, quote,
18	"As much as 50 percent of the heat load by 2050".
19	This sounds great and ambitious, but unfortunately
20	the CLC for National Grid, the CLCPA, provides
21	that there should be economy-wide reductions of 85
22	percent by 2050, so it is unacceptable for them to be
23	aiming at "as much as 50 percent".
24	Finally, the company plans to pair
25	heat pumps with gas appliances, which drives up the

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4	cost of home energy upkeep for customers. This is
5	based on the fossil fuel industry created myth that
6	heat pumps are inadequate for extreme cold. That may
7	have been true thirty years ago, I but it is not
8	true now. I know personally about the ability of
9	heat pumps to perform in extreme cold because I live
10	in Rensselaer County and I my wife and I purchased
11	an air source heat pump for our home roughly a year
12	ago. We were quite comfortable all winter while
13	saving gas costs.
14	Third, the PSC, in its final order,
15	must comply with Section 7(3) of the CLCPA, which
16	mandates that for all administrative approvals and
17	decisions, including this rate case, the PSC and
18	other state agencies should not, quote,
19	"disproportionately burden" close quote,
20	disadvantaged communities and and must prioritize
21	reductions in these communities.
22	In summary, as others have said and
23	will say, the PS we have a climate crisis. The
24	PSC has the responsibility to protect both ratepayers
25	and the climate. Groups like my own that represent

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4	consumers and the climate are enormously underfunded
5	as compared with the corporate corporate giants
6	like National Grid. We depend on your agency to look
7	out for ratepayers in your mission to advance the
8	public interest. Practically, this means the PSC
9	should carefully scrutinize each of the proposed new
10	projects and other expenditures in National Grid's
11	rate plan to make sure they are truly necessary to
12	provide safe and reliable service.
13	To repeat just one time, we don't have
14	a team of accountants at Citizen Action, and we
15	don't have any accountants at Citizen Action, or
16	engineers. So that's the Public Service Commission's
17	job, to look into the these these voluminous
18	filings they do. This multi-million-dollar
19	expenditures the multi-million-dollar expenditures
20	of National Grid cannot be pretext for maintaining
21	and expanding the current gas system, which generates
22	enormous profits for the company. Thank you.
23	A.L.J. BELSITO: Thank you. The next
24	speaker is Ruth Foster.

MS. FOSTER: Hi. Thank you. And my

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name is Ruth Foster. I live in East Greenbush, New York, and I am here because I am literally freaked out about the climate crisis. Every day we hear of terrible storms. Yesterday in the news, they said 700 million people in Africa are going to have to move because there isn't going to be any place for them to live. And those kind of dangers are going to happen in this state, too. In this state, the NOAA, the National -- what is it? National Ocean Administration (sic) says that there have been eight climate events in this state this year that have cost our state over \$1 billion. And as -- the last five years, the average number of billion-dollar climate events has been 4.4 a year. Back in 1980, when this first started, the first five years, the average was 0.6, less than one a year.

So this is a real indication of how expensive these climate disasters are for our state and our community. And as people are getting their homes washed away and people are dying -- people died in the snowstorms last year in Buffalo. We just can't continue this way. And unfortunately, National

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Grid wants to continue the fossil fuel infrastructure into the future. And the fossil fuel industry has known about this since -- some people say the 1950s, some say the 1970s. I don't know, but it's been a really long time. And all that time, they just keep pushing fossil fuels and they don't seem to care that we have grandchildren and people are going to need to live in this planet in the future, and they're not going to be able to.

But anyway -- so National Grid put out their energy vision in April of 2022. And in that it said, we are committed to playing a leading role in enabling and accelerating the transition to a clean energy future, while ensuring customers and communities continue to have affordable and reliable options to heat their homes and their businesses.

Well, we know options is a lie. Options means that they want to continue using gas, and we know that gas is destroying our climate. We also know people don't care whether their homes are heated by gas or electric. What they care about is they want warm homes with clean energy and that are affordable. And

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that can be done with heat pumps. We don't need gas to do that. So that is a false choice and that is a lie that they are moving -- they are telling us.

We also know that we need to stop burning fossil fuels. We need to stop bringing frack gas into this country. And National Grid can decide to either go -- go along with what needs to happen, and they can start building pipelines for geothermal and district geothermal, or they can continue to push frack gas pipelines. And unfortunately, they're continuing to push frack gas pipelines with this rate increase. We know that New York law requires that 85 percent of greenhouse gases need to be reduced by 2050. They are proposing only 50 percent. They are breaking the law. That is against the law. shouldn't be allowed to do that. They are proposing to spend more -- close to 2 billion in upgrades to the frack gas system at a time when they should be shutting down the pipelines.

They're proposing to add renewable natural gas to their gas system. This is a shameless attempt to maintain the status quo and keep us

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4	shackled to produce polluting fuels and dangerous
5	infrastructure. Renewable gas natural gas is
6	methane, just the same as the frack gas that they are
7	currently using. It creates greenhouse gas emissions
8	when they burn it, and building a whole new system to
9	put it into our pipelines is just adding more
10	greenhouse gas emissions to their inventory of
11	greenhouse gas emissions.
12	It they say we anyway anyway.
13	So just for the climate and for the cost of
14	consumers, we can't afford this rate increase and we
15	should not be paying for their continued pushing
16	frack gas on us. Thank you.
17	A.L.J. BELSITO: Thank you. Next
18	speaker is Elisha Mary Burns. Elisha Mary Burns?
19	No? The next speaker, then, is Danny Boudreau.
20	MR. BOUDREAU: My name is Danny
21	Boudreau, and I am not only speaking you to you
22	today as an Albany resident, but as a nurse
23	advocating for the healthcare community beyond what
24	heat can offer. I think we are all aware that the
25	price of food to housing to transportation have all

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increased dramatically. Some items increased by more than 50 percent, already burdening many segments of our society. The proposed increases to the cost of energy will create further hardship on an already struggling community.

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While many of us understand the impact these rising costs would have on our wallets, it is important to understand the impact on the health of our community. This is not just an economic problem for individuals; it further exacerbates a public health crisis. By proposing such a high increase in electric and gas rates, you are putting people's lives at risk, especially among our most vulnerable populations, the impoverished and the elderly. Let me explain.

Many of these individuals live on small, limited incomes that do not keep pace with inflation or rising utility costs. Believe it or not, it is relatively common for these vulnerable community members to lower the temperature of their thermostats in the winter because there is a need to lower their heating bills. One of the primary health

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risks the elderly face from keeping the heat too low in the winter is hypothermia. This is a condition where the body temperature falls to dangerously low levels and can lead to confusion, slow breathing, and even death in some cases.

In older adults, even a mildly cold indoor temperature of below 68 degrees can cause hypothermia, not to mention the fact that more people die in the winter than in the summer because of cold temperatures. Cold temperatures cause blood vessels to constrict, which leads to increased blood pressure, and places an additional strain on the This results in escalating the risk of heart attacks and strokes, particularly in those living with comorbidities and preexisting heart conditions. Lower temperatures can also have a serious impact on the respiratory system and worsen conditions such as asthma and COPD. Cold air also lowers the immune system and the ability to fight off infections. includes viruses such as COVID and the flu. indoor temperature of lower than 68 degrees increases joint and muscle pain and makes mobility more

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4	difficult for older adults. It also increases their
5	risk of falling, which is already a serious health
6	risk in our population.
7	The increasing cost of energy not only
8	affects the health of our vulnerable community
9	members, but also the health of working families.
10	These rising energy costs, coupled with the rising
11	cost of all the other things I stated, would cause
12	people to make heartbreaking sacrifices just to keep
13	their houses warm and their lights on. These
14	sacrifices might include skipping meals, not filling
15	important prescriptions, and delaying medical care.
16	As a registered nurse, I see these results all the
17	time.
18	As a nurse advocating for the health
19	of others, I'm asking you to reject the proposed rate
20	hike. If we are to be a community that truly cares
21	about one another, then we need to ensure that people
22	can afford to stay warm and stay healthy. Our
23	communities shouldn't have to choose to heat or eat.
24	A.L.J. BELSITO: Thank you. Next
25	speaker is Mark Gronick (ph.).

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4	MR. GRONICK: No. That's okay. I'm
5	going to pass.
6	A.L.J. BELSITO: Okay. You're going
7	to pass? All right. Thank you. Yvonne Fitch?
8	MS. FICKE: Ficke.
9	A.L.J. BELSITO: Ficke.
10	MS. FICKE: Yep.
11	A.L.J. BELSITO: Thank you.
12	MS. FICKE: Just as a residential
13	customer, I am receiving mailings from solar panel
14	farms that are working in concert with National Grid.
15	And it's confusing to me that if I am working with or
16	have a contract with, say, a solar panel farm that
17	the that would take the pressure off of National
18	Grid in providing electricity to the rest of New York
19	State. So it's just confusing to me the the rate
20	hike that they're asking for based on them also
21	sending out mailings to people to contribute to or be
22	part of the solar panel farms.
23	That's all. Thank you.
24	A.L.J. BELSITO: Thank you. Mark
25	Dunbeau (sic)? Please correct my pronunciation of

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4 your names.

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MR. DUNLEA: Good evening. My name is Mark Dunlea, and I am chair and attorney for the Green Education and Legal Fund. And I'm also the coordinator of PAUSE, People of Albany United for Safe Energy, which is a 350.org affiliate in the Capital District.

Most of my remarks are going to be related to the climate issues, which several of the speakers have previously raised. But I do want to briefly address the issue of affordability. I spent more than thirty years working for various antipoverty organizations, primarily as director of the Hunger Action Network of New York State. And when I worked with them, you know, we were feeding about 3 million people a month at the food pantries and soup kitchens and the reasons why people came, you know, to our pantries and soup kitchens was high utility bills, high rent, and high healthcare costs. And so this proposed rate hike is beyond their means.

The last time I formally intervened for an organization in a rate case against -- at that

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point they were the Mohawk -- was in 1982. And one of the main issues that we raised was that, as a regulated monopoly with a guaranteed rate of return, at that point, I believe they were looking for a 9 percent rate of return, and we felt that was excessive. I last week went to my federal credit union to open up a new CD, certificate of deposit, and the best rate they had was 4.15 percent. They're asking for 10 percent.

Particularly with the governor being so bad recently on climate issues, probably because of the issue of affordability, it certainly would seem to make sense to reduce the rate of return to a more reasonable level. I will note that, as Bob Cohen pointed that out, that the rate hikes are expected for a customer who gets both gas and electricity about \$400 a year. At the present time, about 16 percent of National Grid customers are facing energy debt burdens for an average of \$1,362. In June 2024, 11,714 customers of National Grid had their service terminated for failure to pay bills.

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this increase is even worse.

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In terms of climate change, the head of the United Nations, the Secretary General, has said that the failure of our governments to take action on climate change has literally opened, in his words, the gates to hell. Climate scientists, the Paris Climate Accords, set a target of keeping global warming at 1.5 degrees Celsius. For the last year, we have breached that 1.5 degrees Celsius. We cannot continue to burn fossil fuels if we wish to avoid catastrophic climate change.

Several people have noted that this rate hike includes 1.9 billion -- that's with a B -billion in upgrades to the gas system that causes climate change. The company wants to spend \$39 million in new gas hookups and more than \$800 million to replace 145 miles of pipelines. These should be phased out. More than 30 million of this is to connect the so-called renewable natural gas, which, as people point out, is just another false climate solution.

25 Governor -- Governor Hochul, state

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4	comptroller, NYSERDA have all issued recent reports
5	saying the State was unlikely to meet its CLCPA goals
6	for the use of renewable energy and electricity in
7	2030. We can no longer afford the PSC or the
8	National Grid stalling on moving towards renewable
9	energy. Bob Cohen mentioned the whole issue of air
10	heat pumps. We installed air heat pumps in our house
11	three years ago. They do work in cold weather. We
12	do urge the Public Service Commission to comply with
13	the CLCPA, to take action to require National Grid to
14	reduce the use of gas emissions, and to take steps to
15	keep I'm sorry to make their rates affordable.
16	Thank you.
17	A.L.J. BELSITO: Thank you. Next
18	speaker is Erika Pine-Weinman.
19	MS. PINE-WEINMAN: Hello, gentlemen.
20	My statement is very brief. Have you lobbied
21	Governor Cathy Hochul to increase the income level
22	for heating, electric, and assisting program heat so
23	that less well-heeled New Yorkers can afford higher
24	rates? That's it.

A.L.J. BELSITO: Thank you. The next

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4	speaker is Theresa Hotte.

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MS. HOTTE: Good evening and thank
you, Administrative Law Judges Clarke and Belsito.

My name is Theresa Hotte, and I'm litigation and
policy counsel for the Public Utility Law Project, or
PULP. My pronouns are she and her.

PULP is a forty-year-old nonprofit with the mission of educating, advocating, and litigating on behalf of New York State's low-income and utility customers. PULP participates in rate cases and policy proceedings as parties before the Department of Public Service. PULP, like Legal Aid, also offers direct services to low-income individuals with utility problems, including things like resolving termination notices, figuring out financial assistance programs they may be eligible for, and teaching them how to read their bills, and more. Our experiences in both policy research and direct service shape our comments today in both the electric and gas cases, as well as the testimony we plan to file on September 26th.

National Grid requested to raise their

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4	rates in May. Based on estimates under their
5	request, the average residential customer's bill
6	would increase by almost \$19 per month on the
7	electric side and \$18 per month on the gas side.
8	Increases of this size would further burden customers
9	who are already experiencing unaffordable bills.
10	According to the company's collections activities
11	report, as of July 2024, more than 200,000
12	residential customers are behind by 60 days or more
13	on their bills. PULP is concerned that if utility
14	bills go up, it would leave customers with impossible
15	choices like forgoing food or medicine in order to
16	keep the lights or the heat on.
17	According to a 2022 report by the New
18	York State Comptroller's Office, 12.8 percent of
19	families in Albany County live in poverty. A
20	staggering 31.6 percent of female-headed households
21	in Albany County live in poverty, which is almost 10
22	percent more than the statewide average. Poverty
23	statistics are nearly doubled for black, Hispanic,
24	Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, and American
25	Indian households. Another Comptroller report shows

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that when compared to US cities with similar
population levels, Albany has child poverty rates
that are double the average for their comparable
cohort cities.
As an organization, PULP's greatest
concerns surround affordability for low-income
National Grid customers. However, these rate
increases will impact both moderate-income customers
and small businesses.
We understand that National Grid has a
duty to provide safe and reliable service. They also
have a duty to do so at just and reasonable rates.
PULP urges the Department of Public Service and the
Public Service Commission to scrutinize this rate
filing and any decisions that come before them to
protect ratepayers from unnecessary, unreasonable, or
unjust expenses.
Thank you again for this opportunity
to speak.
A.L.J. BELSITO: Thank you. The next
speaker is Alvaro Carascal.

MR. CARASCAL: Close enough. Good

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evening. My name is Alvaro Carascal, and I'm a volunteer member of AARP Executive Council, and I live in the National Grid service territory. Thank you for the opportunity to speak tonight concerning National Grid utility rate increases.

request and urges the Public Service Commission to reject this increase. National Grid is proposing yet another increase, five times greater than inflation, for this Upstate New York service territory. The company's rate increases requests 525 million for electric and 148 million for gas delivery service.

These are unacceptable and should be dramatically reduced by the PSC. If approved by the Public Service Commission, these would result in monthly delivery bills' increases for the average residential customer of approximately 23.4 percent for electric and 28.9 percent for our gas. This is excessive and unacceptable.

AARP strongly recommends the PSC to take into consideration that many of National Grid customers cannot afford their bills now. National

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4	Grid's bills have haven't been affordable for low-
5	and moderate-income customers, and this increase will
6	make it worse. Right now, there are 236,000
7	households who are 60 days or more late on their bill
8	for National Grid, with over 46,351 households
9	receiving a final termination notice in July, which
10	is the latest data available through the National
11	Grid website.
12	These proposed increases would
13	undoubtedly add to the financial burden of hundreds
14	of thousands of older New Yorkers living on a fixed
15	income, who are already struggling to pay the monthly
16	utility bills and other daily living expenses. AARP
17	believes that certain actions by the PSC should be
18	taken in this rate case.
19	First, the customer charges should not
20	be increased; they are already too high. High
21	customer charges make controlling your energy bill
22	more difficult. Secondly, the return on investment
23	requested, 10.5 percent, far exceeds what utilities
24	around the country are getting and should be reduced.
25	Finally, I specifically require the utilities to

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apply and maximize all federal dollars available to alleviate costs to existing ratepayers.

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National Grid and the filing with the PSC, a large portion of the requested increase is necessary to prepare for the groundwork for the transition away from fossil fuels and greater use of electricity.

This is consistent with the steady justification we have seen from many recent utility rate increases requests, and the result of these requests in the past few years have largely been settlements that include a staggering, unaffordable utility rate increases for taxpaying ratepayers.

The negotiated outcomes of these cases are not working for ratepayers, and the State's approach has to change. While this is an issue that goes beyond this rate case exclusively, it is certainly a driver in this case. As New York moves toward a clean energy future, it is imperative that we stop rubberstamping the placement of the enormous cost of New York transition to clean energy squarely on the backs of utility ratepayers and develop a more

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4	equitable strategy to pay for this transition.
5	AARP believes that the governor, the
6	Public Service Commission, and the legislature should
7	work together more than ever to make sure energy
8	costs become affordable for New Yorkers. Thank you.
9	A.L.J. BELSITO: Thank you. The next
10	speaker is Christine Horne.
11	MS. HORNE: Good evening. My name is
12	Chris Horne; I'm the president of Junior Achievement
13	of Northeastern New York. We are a worldwide
14	nonprofit organization, and here in the Capital
15	Region, we serve 11 counties and more than 13,000
16	students each year, including more than 50 percent
17	low- to moderate-income populations. Our mission is
18	to inspire and prepare students to succeed in the
19	areas of financial literacy, work and career
20	readiness, and entrepreneurship. The backbone of our
21	programming is support of volunteers from the local
22	business community. They provide what we call our
23	secret sauce, which is real world perspective and
24	hands-on learning for our students. And it comes
25	full circle because it's the same business community

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4	who are the beneficiaries of these future workers,
5	entrepreneurs, and in the case of National Grid,
6	future ratepayers.
7	National Grid has been a very, very
8	important business community partner with Junior
9	Achievement for decades. National Grid executives
L 0	have served on our board of directors since at least
11	the 1990s, probably more, but that's as far as our
L2	records and memories go. They provide volunteers to
L3	deliver classroom programs from kindergarten through
L 4	high school grades, teaching about community and
L 5	jobs, money, and the economy. They do a fantastic
L 6	job and are specifically requested by school
L 7	administrators and teachers alike.
18	Here's some examples of their
L 9	engagement recently. In the last school year, we had
20	forty employees from National Grid's Employee Week of
21	Service volunteer at Harmony Hills Elementary School
22	in the Cohoes City School District. They delivered

in the Cohoes City School District. They delivered
classroom programming to every classroom. They
talked about jobs, they demonstrated equipment, they
put youngsters in awe with their giant trucks and

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4	gear. National Grid also supports an annual JA Job
5	Shadow Day onsite at their facility in Albany, where
6	older middle school and high school students take a
7	deeper dive into various trades and professions.
8	Last year, 30 National Grid volunteers supported a
9	day of hands-on learning and mentorship to 40
10	students from the Albany City School District, giving
11	more than 150 hours of service. And finally,
12	National Grid supports our special programming and
13	events like our Junior Achievement Stock Market
14	Challenge with volunteer teams. We simply couldn't
15	pull off these kinds of events without such help.
16	JA is fortunate for our longstanding
17	partners like National Grid and so many others, and
18	while no one likes the idea of paying more for
19	anything, we do understand that, if we are going to
20	reach our state's climate goals, it's essential to
21	fund our infrastructure. This is in order to
22	continue reliable service, access renewable
23	technologies like wind, solar, and geothermal, and
24	support our transition to a cleaner grid. We
25	recognize the ongoing investment this requires, just

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4	as companies like National Grid, in turn, invest in
5	the future of our youth and our communities.
6	Thank you for your time and thank you
7	to National Grid for their support of our mission.
8	A.L.J. BELSITO: Thank you. The next
9	speaker is Robert Connors.
10	MR. CONNORS: Thank you for the
11	opportunity to to speak tonight. I appreciate
12	your being here. And my name is Robert Connors, and
13	I am a cofounder of a group called Stop New York
14	Fracked Gas Pipeline, also a board member. And we -
15	a large portion of our members, over 2,000-plus
16	members actually, do live in Upstate New York, and
17	National Grid is its provider of utilities. But we
18	are certainly opposed to the continued reliance on
19	fossil fuels to meet our energy needs. Today I wish
20	to focus, however, on the the use of gas by
21	National Grid, notwithstanding my opposition to its
22	exorbitant rate increase request.
23	In its joint agreement with the PSC,
24	or Public Service Commission, back in 2022, this
25	National Grid basically, as you know, basically

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4	agreed to reduce its use of gas and and to
5	promote promote conservation, efficiency, non-
6	pipeline alternatives, among many other things.
7	Instead, its current proposal is very weak in my
8	opinion, and and will result in a failure to
9	adequately meet adequately meet its promise and
L 0	will fail to meet its CLCPA goals.
11	For example, as been has been
12	mentioned several times tonight, spending \$39 million
13	in, quote, new and I emphasize new pipelines,
L 4	flies in the face of its obligations in the 2022
15	agreement. Furthermore, using \$30 million of this
16	money for so-called renewable natural gas is
L7	laughable in my opinion. And indeed, it's a false
18	solution, as has been mentioned, for reducing
19	greenhouse gas emissions, because any burning and
20	transmission of transmission and burning of fossil
21	fuels simply releases more greenhouse gas pollutants
22	to our atmosphere.
23	I strongly urge the PSC to put its
24	foot down put its foot down and require National

Grid to comply with the terms of its '22 agreement --

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4	2022 agreement by simply only allocating funds to
5	National Grid for actions that will meet its
6	obligations. I also ask the PSC to have Upstate New
7	York public more public meetings so that the many
8	National Grid customers who aren't aware of this rate
9	increase or maybe aren't even aware of these
10	meetings, because I there hasn't been a lot of
11	how how should I say it in the summertime, I
12	don't think people pay as much attention to the
13	upcoming events as they might this time of year. So
14	I think if there were more more notices of
15	meetings and more meetings, I think the general
16	public would be have a much better understanding
17	of both sides of the issue. And I strongly encourage
18	you to do that. And simply time is on our side is
19	not on our side when it comes to climate. And I do
20	thank you for your considerations.
21	A.L.J. BELSITO: Thank you. Next
22	speaker is Suzanne Pollard.
23	MS. POLLARD: Good evening. Again, my
24	name is Suzanne Pollard, and I'm a resident of

Schodack, New York. And I am here and appreciate the

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opportunity to speak about the request for increased gas and electric rates to our residents and our small businesses in Upstate New York.

I'm asking that the PSC decline the proposed rate increases and -- as you've heard, the increased monthly delivery rates for National Grid customers, and if we think about the ones using both gas and electric in their household or their businesses, that cost to average residential customers is over \$400 a year, and that's about a 20 percent increase in electric delivery and 28 percent in gas delivery. These increases are burdensome to most residents and small businesses in our upstate communities, who are slowly recovering from economically disastrous effects of the shutdowns we experienced during the COVID pandemic.

National Grid claims they need to expand the gas delivery systems to meet future demands, stated as upgrades to delivery of safe and reliable energy while supporting clean energy transition goals of the New York CLCPA. The upgrades, by their very nature, only continue

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investment in the fossil fuel infrastructure, which we know is a major contributor to climate change and environmental damage, and therefore not consistent with the goals of the CLCPA.

The rate increases proposed are not being applied to the costs of transitioning to nonpipeline alternatives, costs which should not be borne by the taxpayers alone while utilities continue to earn record profits. We're being forced to pay more money to National Grid annually, while they do nothing to help consumers transition off of fossil fuels. Based on the direct testimony of the National Grid CLCPA panel, which was submitted to the Public Service Commission in 2024, there have (sic) been only one project in nearly five years that has offered alternative NPA solutions to the public. company identified 19 homes within an area that needed replacement of a leak-prone pipeline, who were then offered electrification versus the new natural gas pipeline. And we need to question why, in nearly five years' time, have they only documented one project which only retired 586 feet of pipeline?

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4	If the problem is convincing customers
5	to disconnect from gas lines, when do we incentivize
6	or educate or facilitate a transition? At what point
7	do we stop advancing the fossil fuel industry
8	infrastructure? Ratepayers should demand that
9	profits go towards the support of clean energy
10	alternatives, incentives for homeowners to transition
11	to clean heating, and electrification alternatives.
12	National Grid and other New York
13	utilities should be required to redirect their
14	marketing toward educating customers on how to opt
15	out of fossil fuels supplies and to move to more
16	sustainable supplies: wind, solar, and hydropower.
17	Selling renewable natural gas as a cheap, clean
18	alternative is not a cleaner solution.
19	I don't think most of us can ignore
20	the extreme environmental changes that we're
21	experiencing storms, floods, fires, droughts
22	nor ignore the costs associated with the recovery
23	from those damages, costs that deter us from the

potential investments we could be making to

transition our power grid for a future without fossil

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4	fuels. And these events only add to the air
5	pollution and the water pollution we can't control.
6	We must take these signs seriously
7	enough to aggressively reduce the burning of fossil
8	fuels and instead make future investments in
9	sustainable, clean energy. We have seen the signs of
10	environmental decline. When will we take the action
11	we need to take? In nearly five years since the
12	CLCPA was passed, we have seen RFPs for study after
13	study, reporting, tracking, consultant assessment
14	reports, but few actual implementation plans.
15	We have to do more, and we must do it
16	faster. We have to aggressively persuade customers
17	that it's in their best interest to disconnect from
18	the fossil fuel supply, to make it easier to choose
19	the green alternatives. We need to reset, and we
20	need to do it soon. Thank you.
21	A.L.J. BELSITO: The next speaker is
22	Donald Mullin.
23	MR. MULLIN: Hello, I'm Don Mullin.
24	I'm here representing myself and my family. I want
25	to thank you for the opportunity to speak.

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As a thirty-year financial executive,

I understand and appreciate the need for capital
improvements, although I believe that we should look
a little bit deeper at some of the numbers. The
increase, I believe, is being proposed as \$18 in year

1. I believe that also includes \$9 in year 2 and
another \$18 in year 3. That brings the total of year

3 up to an \$1,100 increase if the customer has gas
and electric, and there's nothing they can do about
it. They can't turn off their air conditioner in the
summer, and they can't turn down their heat in the
winter.

I know it was stated that the increase was 20 percent. If I look at my bill, I pay \$30 now for delivery for electric. That's going up to \$48.

That's a \$68 increase (sic). I think there's a little bit -- you know, when you massage it with numbers, I think there's some different things that we should look at. I also believe that Grid has the resources. According to Yahoo, they had \$19 million in revenue the last two years, and an earnings before income taxes and depreciation of \$7.8 million.

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4	That's a 40 percent return. This has been consistent
5	for the last three years. Therefore, their business
6	model has the resources that are necessary. They
7	don't need to take mine.
8	The investor capital balance has \$76
9	million versus total debt that's \$47 million. Again,
LO	their business model has the resources. I believe
11	there was a 2001 audit that asked for questions on
12	their capital improvements. I would ask the
13	Commission to please make sure they address that
L 4	audit. I also believe that the State gives them
15	funds and to improve properties and and fix
L 6	things up. I know I do, and there's heavy
L 7	regulations on that. So please look at that.
L 8	The average Social Security increase
L 9	in 2025 for a senior will be \$48 a month, and
20	National Grid's increase will take 77 percent of that
21	from them. Maybe they can look at adjusting things
22	some other ways. Maybe we can look at some other
23	things. But when these investments are done, I never

25 So maybe that's some -- something that we also can

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hear that the delivery charge is going to come down.

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4	get addressed. If their delivery charges should be
5	reduced once the investments are made over time,
6	because their business model seems like it's
7	addressing it. Thank you for your time.
8	A.L.J. BELSITO: Thank you. Next
9	speaker is Joe Scalzo.
10	MR. SCALZO: Hi. Thanks for the
11	opportunity. I just found out about this drill this
12	afternoon, so forgive my hand scratching. I prepared
13	something that is just a series of one-line
14	statements and questions, because I think from what
15	you said in the beginning, these will become part of
16	a record and I may hear something about them later
17	on. I'm not sure if that's true or not, but if
18	that's the case. To be upfront, I I represent my
19	family and National Grid is a pet peeve of mine. So
20	that that being stated, I'll let that go. Okay.
21	What percentage of the increase would
22	be pointed back towards the supply side? This is just
23	for the transmission of power, I think, and the
24	transmission of natural gas. I believe that's what
25	the the article said in the paper. I'll have to

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ask Mr. Wilson what a lot of that means. It also mentioned in the article that the plan says it represents a wholesale rate. It never says what that really means, right? To me, wholesale is what the company is providing to me pays for it. I think -- if that's what that means, it'd be nice to understand that completely.

I'd also like to know what the entire reason is for the entire increase, not just hit or miss as far as what's going to be coming up. Also, what or who is the average customer, and does it include small business? I think somebody implied that it does, but I'm not sure. I didn't see that in the article. Okay. I can't blame National Grid because they didn't write the article.

A real good question of mine is how much energy does National Grid produce on its own as a primary factor? That is to me, how many solar panels does National Grid have and own and use?

Right? My only incentive in this whole thing is cost and quality. The other issues other people can deal with. I'm looking for the money side and how good

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the power is coming to me as.

Is there a goal of National Grid to bury electric lines, and if not, why not, as this is needed. Give us something for our money. I propose that National Grid be -- be forced to bury a certain amount of power lines each year, because then the trees can't fall on them. I mean, to be simple about the whole thing, right?

Further, why does National Grid not work on reducing the delivery charges a percentage?

Why didn't National Grid not increase the amount of hydropower? It certainly has the means to do that.

Its costs are pretty static and did not increase as much as others do. National Grid needs to stop wasting cooperative advertising money with New York State. Yes, I see commercials, I see emails, I see printed materials saying, we're working with NR -- NR -- I think it's NRISDA (sic) or whatever they're called to do this, to do that, to promote this product and that. I haven't got anybody else to buy power from unless there's somebody around the corner selling power. Okay. People are selling solar

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4	arrays I can I can take from, but that's in their
5	pocket, not mine, right? I'm I'm being bombarded
6	with emails and material from New York State and the
7	RDA. Get them off my back. They have no answers.
8	Save the money.
9	How many National Grid to point
10	back to what a couple other purpose people had
11	mentioned, how many National Grid office offices
12	and how many New York State offices utilize heat
13	pumps? I'll bet there are none. It'd be nice to
14	know that. You should speak with your actions. I
15	pay personally, we pay the same minimum supply
16	charges each month as all of you, yet I produce one
17	megawatt of solar panel power each year from my
18	leased panels. So I'm paying to do this. I still
19	got to pay the cost of the supply delivery and there
20	isn't any, right?
21	Why not put your own solar panels in,
22	National Grid? Why not put your own solar fields up?

You have a right of way all across the state. Fill it with solar panels, okay? Stop bugging me for more money. I'm not a -- I'm not a proponent of just

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4	walking away from this stuff. Fossil fuels are here,
5	and they're going to be here to stay for quite a
6	while. Maybe we can minimize their use. Well, you
7	ought to put something on put some meat behind
8	them. If you want to get rid of something, replace
9	it with something that's proven first. Don't take my
LO	shoes and let me walk barefoot. Give me something
11	different, something better. I'm sure it's out
12	there. I don't know where it is. If I if I did,
13	I wouldn't be here.
L 4	Thank you for your time. And I
15	appreciate the opportunity. Where do I look where
16	do I look for this information?
L7	A.L.J. BELSITO: Where the transcript
18	will be? It's on the Department of Public Services
19	website. It'll probably be a few weeks under these
20	case names.
21	MR. SCALZO: Okay. And will they read
22	it?
23	A.L.J. BELSITO: We have one more
24	speaker.

MR. SCALZO: Oh, sorry.

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4	A.L.J. BELSITO: If you wait, I can
5	get you all the details.
6	MR. SCALZO: Thank you very much.
7	A.L.J. BELSITO: The last speaker we
8	have for this evening who's so far filled out a card
9	is Chris Dempf.
10	MR. DEMPF: Good evening. I'm here to
11	speak about coal ash contamination and raise the
12	question of why coal ash has not been remediated in
13	Glenmont. Now, this has been going Niagara Mohawk
14	Power Corporation has existed at that site in
15	Glenmont from 1952 to 1970 at least, generating coal.
16	We are being asked today to substantially increase
17	the rates that that New York taxpayers are paying.
18	The utilities should not be allowed to
19	write off with utility rate increases the cost of
20	remediating coal ash, which it has known about for
21	many, many years. And and this is, you know, a
22	result of electric power generation from from, you
23	know, quite a long period of time. In the
24	alternative, the the PSC should mandate specific
25	budget items and require that that the coal ash be

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4	affirmatively remediated. You're going to have to do
5	it. The EPA generated final coal ash regulations May
6	8, 2024, and there's and all these these
7	utility companies, including Niagara Mohawk, are
8	going to and utility companies and property owners
9	and operators of adjoining properties are going to be
LO	required to provide coal ash alternatives and
11	information.
12	This is not anything new to the Public
13	Service Commission. In fact, in 1980, the Public
L 4	Service Commission commissioned a report and it was
L5	entitled Draft Feasibility Survey of Waste Disposal
16	Alternatives for Albany Steam Station. That's in
17	1980. This report is amazing. And it it
18	documents the the air pollution coal ash
19	migration into the and leaching into the Hudson
20	River. This is a very significant issue.
21	I don't think, respectfully, that the
22	taxpayers should be required to to deal with an

issue in their rate increases where Niagara Mohawk
has known for years that this is -- that this is a
problem. And again, you know, I refer you to that

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4	report. I refer you to the the Albany Port
5	studies that have been done and and the adjoining
6	properties, not not not only the the
7	Bethlehem Energy Center, 13.6 acres of coal ash, 13.5
8	acres on the National Grid property. CSX has
9	possibly some contamination there, too. And of
10	course, the Albany Port.
11	So again, we would ask that serious
12	consideration be given to not having the the cost
13	passed on to consumers for remediating this
14	environmental disaster. Thank you very much.
15	A.L.J. BELSITO: Thank you.
16	At this time, I do not have any other
17	cards requesting to speak. Is there anyone who did
18	not fill out a card that would like to make a
19	statement this evening?
20	All right. Excellent. Seeing no
21	hands, we want to remind members of the public that
22	they may submit public comments throughout these
23	proceedings by other means described earlier and in
24	the notice of public statement hearings issued August
25	26th, 2024. We thank you all the speakers for

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4	your comments today. We'd like to thank Albany
5	Public Library for hosting us today and our court
6	reporter for making sure there's a transcript.
7	With that, the hearing is concluded.
8	Thank you and have a good night. Off the record.
9	(The hearing concluded at 7:06 p.m.)
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in the caption hereto, at
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of pages 1 through 55, is a
dings had at the hearing.
WHEREOF, I have hereunto
the 23rd day of September,
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