

1 9/17/2024 - Niagara Mohawk Power Corporation D/B/A
 2 National Grid for Electric Service, 24-E-0322 and 24-
 3 G-0323

4 STATE OF NEW YORK

5 PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

6 CASE 24-E-0322; 24-G-0323 - In the Matter of Niagara
 7 Mohawk Corporation d/b/a National Grid for Electric
 8 Service and Niagara Mohawk Corporation d/b/a National
 9 Grid for Gas Service

10 PUBLIC 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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20 Reported by Barrington 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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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
 24 be submitted and will be considered throughout the
 25 pendency of this proceeding. For those of you that

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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 be respectful to today's
23 speakers. We recognize that there may be differing
24 viewpoints, but this event is being held so that we
25 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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4 suffer the consequences of the uptick in emissions
5 contributed by those appliances. Given the gravity
6 of our climate predicament, it is gross negligence
7 now to continue pursuing new gas hookups. National
8 Grid must do better, and regulators must ensure that
9 they do.

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

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4 regulators must ensure that they do.

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

24 Thank you for the opportunity to
25 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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4 take the company at its word that is -- it is prudent
5 and necessary. And the -- and the PSC should
6 certainly consider mandating that any permitted rate
7 increase be in steps to cushion the rate shock of
8 proposed -- the proposed double-digit percentage
9 increases on customers.

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

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

15 It's clear that National Grid's rate
16 proposal does not adequately address the climate
17 crisis. The amount the company is seeking, as has
18 already been said, includes more than \$1.9 billion in
19 upgrades to the gas system that causes climate
20 change, including, as already been said, \$39 million
21 for new gas hookups and more than 800 million to
22 replace 145 miles of pipeline. Further, more than 30
23 million is proposed for utilization of so-called
24 renewable natural gas, which is known by every
25 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 name is Ruth Foster. I live in East Greenbush, New
5 York, and I am here because I am literally freaked
6 out about the climate crisis. Every day we hear of
7 terrible storms. Yesterday in the news, they said
8 700 million people in Africa are going to have to
9 move because there isn't going to be any place for
10 them to live. And those kind of dangers are going to
11 happen in this state, too. In this state, the NOAA,
12 the National -- what is it? National Ocean
13 Administration (sic) says that there have been eight
14 climate events in this state this year that have cost
15 our state over \$1 billion. And as -- the last five
16 years, the average number of billion-dollar climate
17 events has been 4.4 a year. Back in 1980, when this
18 first started, the first five years, the average was
19 0.6, less than one a year.

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

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

13 But anyway -- so National Grid put out
14 their energy vision in April of 2022. And in that it
15 said, we are committed to playing a leading role in
16 enabling and accelerating the transition to a clean
17 energy future, while ensuring customers and
18 communities continue to have affordable and reliable
19 options to heat their homes and their businesses.
20 Well, we know options is a lie. Options means that
21 they want to continue using gas, and we know that gas
22 is destroying our climate. We also know people don't
23 care whether their homes are heated by gas or
24 electric. What they care about is they want warm
25 homes with clean energy and that are affordable. And

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

7 We also know that we need to stop
8 burning fossil fuels. We need to stop bringing frack
9 gas into this country. And National Grid can decide
10 to either go -- go along with what needs to happen,
11 and they can start building pipelines for geothermal
12 and district geothermal, or they can continue to push
13 frack gas pipelines. And unfortunately, they're
14 continuing to push frack gas pipelines with this rate
15 increase. We know that New York law requires that 85
16 percent of greenhouse gases need to be reduced by
17 2050. They are proposing only 50 percent. They are
18 breaking the law. That is against the law. They
19 shouldn't be allowed to do that. They are proposing
20 to spend more -- close to 2 billion in upgrades to
21 the frack gas system at a time when they should be
22 shutting down the pipelines.

23 They're proposing to add renewable
24 natural gas to their gas system. This is a shameless
25 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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4 increased dramatically. Some items increased by more
5 than 50 percent, already burdening many segments of
6 our society. The proposed increases to the cost of
7 energy will create further hardship on an already
8 struggling community.

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

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

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

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

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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.

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

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

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

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

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

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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.

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

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4 speaker is Theresa Hotte.

5 MS. HOTTE: Good evening and thank
6 you, Administrative Law Judges Clarke and Belsito.
7 My name is Theresa Hotte, and I'm litigation and
8 policy counsel for the Public Utility Law Project, or
9 PULP. My pronouns are she and her.

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

25 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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 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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4 apply and maximize all federal dollars available to
5 alleviate costs to existing ratepayers.

6 To conclude my remarks, according to
7 National Grid and the filing with the PSC, a large
8 portion of the requested increase is necessary to
9 prepare for the groundwork for the transition away
10 from fossil fuels and greater use of electricity.
11 This is consistent with the steady justification we
12 have seen from many recent utility rate increases
13 requests, and the result of these requests in the
14 past few years have largely been settlements that
15 include a staggering, unaffordable utility rate
16 increases for taxpaying ratepayers.

17 The negotiated outcomes of these cases
18 are not working for ratepayers, and the State's
19 approach has to change. While this is an issue that
20 goes beyond this rate case exclusively, it is
21 certainly a driver in this case. As New York moves
22 toward a clean energy future, it is imperative that
23 we stop rubberstamping the placement of the enormous
24 cost of New York transition to clean energy squarely
25 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
10 have served on our board of directors since at least
11 the 1990s, probably more, but that's as far as our
12 records and memories go. They provide volunteers to
13 deliver classroom programs from kindergarten through
14 high school grades, teaching about community and
15 jobs, money, and the economy. They do a fantastic
16 job and are specifically requested by school
17 administrators and teachers alike.

18 Here's some examples of their
19 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
23 classroom programming to every classroom. They
24 talked about jobs, they demonstrated equipment, they
25 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
10 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,
14 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
17 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
25 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
25 Schodack, New York. And I am here and appreciate the

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

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

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

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

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

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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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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,
10 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
14 audit. I also believe that the State gives them
15 funds and -- to improve properties and -- and fix
16 things up. I know I do, and there's heavy
17 regulations on that. So please look at that.

18 The average Social Security increase
19 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
24 hear that the delivery charge is going to come down.
25 So maybe that's some -- something that we also can

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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

