

1 9/28/2022 - NYSEG/RG&E - 22-E-0317,0319/22-G-0318,0320

2 STATE OF NEW YORK

3 PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

4 CASE 22-E-0317 - Proceeding on motion of the
5 Commission as to the rates, charges, rules, and
6 regulations of the New York State Electric and Gas
7 Corporation for electric service.

8 CASE 22-G-0318 - Proceeding on motion of the
9 Commission as to the rates, charges, rules, and
10 regulations of New York State Electric and Gas
11 Corporation for gas service.

12 CASE 22-E-0319 - Proceeding on motion of the
13 Commission as to the rates, charges, rules, and
14 regulations of Rochester Gas and Electric
15 Corporation for electric service.

16 CASE 22-G-0320 - Proceeding on motion of the
17 Commission as to the rates, charges, rules, and
18 regulations of Rochester Gas and Electric
19 Corporation for gas service.

20 PUBLIC STATEMENT HEARING

21 DATE: September 28, 2022 at 1:01 p.m.

22 VENUE: WebEx

23 BEFORE: A.L.J. LINDSEY OVERTON

24 A.L.J. ERIKA BERGEN

25 Reported by Anthony McClain

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2 (The hearing commenced at 1:01 p.m.)

3 THE REPORTER: We are on the record.

4 A.L.J. OVERTON: I call case 22-E-
5 0317, Proceeding on Motion of the Commission as to
6 the rates, charges, rules, and regulations of the New
7 York State Electric and Gas Corporation for electric
8 service;

9 Case 22-G-0318, Proceeding on Motion
10 of the Commission as to the rates, charges, rules,
11 and regulations of New York State Electric and Gas
12 Corporation for gas service;

13 Case 22-E-0319, Proceeding on Motion
14 of the Commission as to the rates, charges, rules,
15 and regulations of Rochester Gas and Electric
16 Corporation for electric service;

17 And Case 22-G-0320, Proceeding on
18 Motion of the Commission as to the rates, charges,
19 rules, and regulations of Rochester Gas and Electric
20 Corporation for gas service.

21 Good afternoon and welcome. My name
22 is Lindsey Overton and I am an administrative law
23 judge with the New York State Department of Public
24 Service. With me is Administrative Law Judge Erika
25 Bergen. And, together, we are responsible for

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2 presiding over the hearings in these cases and the
3 development of a complete record in these
4 proceedings.

5 We are here today for a public
6 statement hearing that was noticed on August 19th,
7 2022. New York State Electric and Gas Corporation,
8 which I will refer to as NYSEG, and Rochester Gas and
9 Electric Corporation, which I will refer to as RG&E,
10 filed amendments to their electric and gas tariffs
11 schedules on May 26th, 2022, proposing to increase
12 their annual electric and gas delivery revenues
13 effective May 1st, 2023.

14 NYSEG proposes to increase its annual
15 electric delivery revenues by approximately 274
16 million, which is a 31.2% increase in base delivery
17 revenues, or 16.8% increase in total revenues.

18 NYSEG requests an increase in its
19 annual gas delivery revenues of approximately \$43
20 million, which is a 20.7% increase in base delivery
21 revenues or 9.8% increase in total revenues.

22 RG&E requests an annual increase in
23 its electric delivery revenues of approximately \$93.8
24 million, which is a 19% increase in delivery revenues
25 or 11.3% increase in total revenues.

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2 RG&E also requests an annual increase
3 in gas delivery revenues of approximately \$37
4 million, which is a 20.9% increase in base delivery
5 revenues or 9.7% increase in total revenues.

6 We are holding this hearing so that
7 the public can provide its comments on these
8 proposals for the Public Service Commission's
9 consideration. The Commission will consider -- will
10 decide the terms and conditions of service for NYSEG
11 and RG&E.

12 The Commission consists of seven
13 number -- members, the Chair Roy Christian, and
14 Commissioners Diane Burman, James Alesi, Tracey
15 Edwards, John Howard, David Valesky, and John
16 Maggiore.

17 Now, I will take a moment to explain
18 the process that we are going to follow today. As I
19 explained before, the purpose of this hearing is to
20 provide you with an opportunity to tell the
21 Commission your thoughts on NYSEG's and RG&E's rate
22 proposals. The statements you make today will become
23 part of the case record.

24 We have a court reporter on the line,
25 who will prepare a transcript of the hearing, which

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2 will be included in the official record of these
3 proceedings so that your comments can be considered
4 by the members of the Commission. When it is ready,
5 the transcript will be publicly available for view on
6 the Department of Public Service website.

7 This hearing is not an evidentiary
8 hearing with cross-examination or a question-and-
9 answer session, but really a forum to hear comments
10 from you. This is not the only opportunity for
11 comment, however. If you did not pre-register to
12 speak at today's hearing, but would like your views
13 included in the record, there are a variety of other
14 ways to comment as explained in the public notice for
15 today's event.

16 You can submit comments through the
17 Department's website by email, by regular mail, or by
18 telephone. All comments will be given equal
19 consideration regardless of how they are submitted.
20 Because we are holding this public statement
21 virtually, we have asked people to pre-register to
22 make a public statement at today's hearing.

23 If we get through those who have
24 registered to speak, we will then open the floor up
25 to those on the line who did not pre-register for

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2 today's hearing. We ask that you please summarize
3 any lengthy written statements orally and submit the
4 full written statement by mail or email.

5 We are now ready to begin. If you're
6 going to speak, you should only use one audio input
7 and one audio output at your end. Otherwise, we may
8 experience problems with feedback when you are
9 speaking.

10 I will call the 15 individuals who
11 have timely pre-registered, one by one, to speak. If
12 someone is not available when I call on them, I will
13 continue on with the next person and will come back
14 to those people who were not available, at the end.
15 After I call your name, we will unmute your line and
16 let you know that you are unmuted.

17 Please remember that if you have put
18 your own telephone line or computer on mute, you will
19 also have to unmute your line on your end before you
20 begin to speak. For telephone participants, when we
21 call out your name, we ask that you hit star 3 on
22 your phone so that we can recognize you and unmute
23 your line.

24 It may take a moment for us to locate
25 and unmute you, so please make sure that you wait

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2 until you hear a beep, indicating that your line has
3 been unmuted before you begin to make your statement.
4 Just a reminder again, if you've muted your own
5 telephone, you'll have to unmute that as well.

6 Please speak slowly and clearly so
7 that the court reporter can accurately capture your
8 statements for the record. When your line is
9 unmuted, please state your name and, if you are
10 speaking on behalf of an organization, please
11 identify the name of the organization which you
12 represent.

13 So we are ready to begin. We are
14 going to start with our first participant who has
15 registered to participate by phone, and that is Mark
16 Westcott. Mr. Wescott, if you can please hit star 3
17 on your telephone so that we can recognize you and
18 unmute your line?

19 MR. WHITE: I'm not seeing any unmuted
20 or raised hands, your Honor -- unmuted or any raised
21 hand.

22 A.L.J. OVERTON: Okay. So we will
23 move on to those who have registered electronically
24 and we will come back to Mr. Wescott at the end.

25 So our next speaker is Jenna Lawson.

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2 MS. LAWSON: Hello; can you hear me?

3 A.L.J. OVERTON: I can. Go ahead.

4 Thank you.

5 MS. LAWSON: Thank you. My name is
6 Jenna Lawson. I live in the City of Rochester and
7 I've worked to prevent low- and moderate-income
8 households from experiencing energy burdens and
9 shutoffs for over four years.

10 So when rate hikes like this are
11 proposed, they really act as a tax on the poor. For
12 people who can afford it, rate hikes are abstract and
13 virtually meaningless, but for working class people,
14 the deficit has to come from somewhere and from
15 expenses that are already mandatory.

16 So New York State has defined a
17 reasonable energy burden as 6% of one's household
18 experiences. According to the A.C.E.E.E., 37% of
19 Rochester residents and 44% of Black and Latino
20 Rochester residents pay between 10 to 25% of their
21 energy per income.

22 This proposed rate hike will make
23 matters worse and impose a disproportionate burden on
24 our most vulnerable community members. And to what
25 end? Increasing shareholder profits while people are

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2 left in the dark and the cold. Energy is a human
3 right and it will become increasingly important as
4 our summers are hotter and our winters are colder due
5 to climate change.

6 And spending close to \$1 billion plus
7 interest on gas infrastructure over the next 5 years
8 will exacerbate the effects on climate change in our
9 areas. People in low- and moderate-income households
10 are more likely to be in heat islands and have a
11 higher heat index than more affluent communities,
12 meaning their summers are hotter, meaning their
13 reliance on energy becomes even more important.

14 Adding hydrogen to the gas supply will
15 prolong our reliance on fossil fuel infrastructure,
16 cause pipelines to become brittle, require higher
17 pressures to push the gas through the pipes, and risk
18 more methane leak -- leakage, and will result in
19 increased smog when burned.

20 We should be focusing our efforts on
21 weatherization, energy efficiency, and heat pumps.
22 And we should not be spending rate payment -- payer
23 dollars on rebates for gas appliances and marketing
24 for our project -- our -- for gas products.
25

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2 So I would say that the utilities need
3 to reduce gas sales and greenhouse gas emissions in
4 compliance with New York State's climate law and use
5 the C.L.C.P.A.-mandated method for accounting for
6 methane emissions.

7 Renewable heating needs to be made
8 affordable to everyone, so we need to increase
9 rebates for heat pump technologies, particularly for
10 low- to moderate-income households and make these
11 rebates at point of sale, so it's cheaper to get the
12 technology we need.

13 And then we need to provide
14 weatherization and clean heating and cooling
15 improvements with options to pay back over time
16 through our energy bills. We need to ease the
17 project -- process of connecting renewable energy to
18 the grid and coordinate with renewable energy
19 suppliers to provide more timely and understandable
20 billing. Thank you.

21 A.L.J. OVERTON: Thank you for your
22 comments.

23 Our next speaker is Mel Solomon.

24 MR. SOLOMON: Can you hear me -- can
25 you hear me?

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2 A.L.J. OVERTON: We're getting some
3 feedback on your end.

4 MR. SOLOMON: Yes.

5 A.L.J. OVERTON: It appears that Mel
6 Solomon is logged in to -- with two devices. Perhaps
7 disconnecting one will help with the feedback.

8 MR. SOLOMON: No. I'm just signed in
9 on my computer.

10 MR. WHITE: Mr. Solomon, this is
11 Joseph. If you have your phone connected and your --
12 and your -- and your computer connected at the same
13 time, you're getting feedback that way. So you need
14 one device to talk through. You've just raised your
15 hand.

16 MR. SOLOMON: Yeah.

17 MR. WHITE: Right, so you're on two
18 devices, sir. If you just use your computer, that
19 would be -- that would work or if you just choose to
20 use your phone.

21 MR. SOLOMON: My phone is -- just a
22 minute.

23 MR. WHITE: So I see that you're on
24 two devices, sir. So you're on -- your -- your
25 computer and your phone. Is that correct, or no?

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2 MR. SOLOMON: No.

3 MR. WHITE: No? All right. Well, go
4 ahead and speak, sir.

5 MR. SOLOMON: Let me try to turn off
6 my phone.

7 MR. WHITE: You want us to come back
8 to you, Mr. Solomon?

9 MR. SOLOMON: Can you hear me?

10 MR. WHITE: We can hear you, Mr.
11 Solomon. Can you hear us?

12 MR. SOLOMON: Yeah, I hear you.

13 MR. WHITE: We just -- we just hear --
14 we hear an echo, sir. So that --

15 MR. SOLOMON: I do --.

16 MR. WHITE: -- that usually indicates
17 there's two devices connected.

18 MR. SOLOMON: Right.

19 MR. WHITE: So we'll -- we'll try you
20 back.

21 MR. SOLOMON: Okay.

22 MR. WHITE: Okay. Thank you.

23 A.L.J. OVERTON: Before we move on, I
24 would just recommend, Mr. Solomon, disconnect

25

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2 completely from the WebEx and then try logging back
3 in and maybe that will help resolve the issue.

4 Okay. Moving on to our next speaker,
5 Michael Cashman.

6 MR. CASHMAN: Yes, good day. Can you
7 hear me?

8 A.L.J. OVERTON: I can. Go ahead.

9 MR. CASHMAN: All right. Thank you.

10 My name is Michael Cashman. I'm the
11 Plattsburgh Town Supervisor. And to put it in
12 perspective, I live in a community of approximately
13 12,000 residents and there are approximately 80,000
14 within our county.

15 The New York State Electric and Gas
16 proposal would see hikes of approximately \$15 to \$18
17 a month from how we've penciled it out. And NYSEG's
18 higher rates are being said -- needed to modernize
19 and upgrade aging infrastructure. We certainly
20 support the need for stronger infrastructure in the
21 North Country because of our storms.

22 But further, I'd like to illustrate
23 that households in the greater Plattsburgh region
24 have a median annual income of about 51,000, which is
25

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2 less than the median annual income of about 64,000 in
3 the entire United States.

4 These proposals, no doubt, will burden
5 customers, simply compounding the fiscal stresses
6 that families and individuals are living with as we
7 are facing a recession. Further, I'd like to state
8 that for the seventh year, the Town of Plattsburgh is
9 putting forward its town budget under the New York
10 state tax cap, which represents approximately a 2%
11 tax cap.

12 We still need to plow roads. We need
13 to build out infrastructure. And while we're
14 responsible for these public services in our
15 township, NYSEG is proposing approximately a 30%
16 increase. We understand that there needs to be some
17 increase, but the proposed hike -- rate hikes are
18 simply shameful and will be a burden.

19 And I would urge the commissioners and
20 others not to support such a drastic change at this
21 time. Thank you.

22 A.L.J. OVERTON: Thank you for your
23 comments.

24 Our next speaker is Karim Beers. I
25 apologize if I am mispronouncing your name.

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2 MR. BEERS: Hi; this is Karim Beers.

3 I live in the City of Ithaca. Thank you for giving
4 me this opportunity.

5 While I'm not speaking on behalf of an
6 organization, in my work, I do serve low-income
7 people throughout the Southern Tier region with
8 energy advising and support.

9 So over the course of the year, me and
10 my colleagues work with hundreds of people, mostly
11 low income in an eight-county region in the southern
12 tier. And as others have spoken, the increase will
13 be a significant burden to families who are already
14 struggling to pay their utility bills. Many have
15 already fallen behind.

16 And this is not the time for such a
17 huge increase right when the price of fuels are also
18 going up, and inflation is so high, especially not
19 for such excessive profits for this company.

20 We do support -- I do support
21 infrastructure and, of course, the -- and applaud the
22 utilities for the work they've done supporting heat
23 pumps. But I do not support such a significant
24 increase to rate -- ratepayers. Thank you very much.

25

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2 A.L.J. OVERTON: Thank you for your
3 comment.

4 I'm going to go back to Mel Solomon,
5 because it looks like you are on as one user. So
6 let's try that again.

7 MR. SOLOMON: Can you hear me?

8 A.L.J. OVERTON: I can. Go ahead.

9 MR. SOLOMON: Okay. I was logged on
10 twice on the same computer, if that's possible. But
11 anyways, thank you for allowing me to comment.

12 I'm a resident in Ithaca in the NYSEG
13 service area. So I don't represent anybody except
14 the residents that agree -- might agree with me. I
15 assume there is no NYSEG or RG&E management on this
16 panel; are there?

17 A.L.J. OVERTON: No, sir. This is
18 just a forum for public comment.

19 MR. SOLOMON: Okay. When NYSEG
20 applied for a rate increase in of 2020 to cover 3
21 years to 2023, the Public Service Commission said we
22 have to look at the consumers' ability to pay. Well,
23 we're in an 8 or 10% inflation environment today and
24 consumer is less able to pay higher rates than we did
25 in 2020.

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2 We're paying for increased energy
3 costs already in our purchases of food, clothing,
4 FedEx just increased their rates and paying fuel
5 costs, plastic items that we buy that are petroleum
6 based, all transportation, so many other higher costs
7 of other items that are purchased.

8 We're being asked for rate increase
9 partially because, as Avangrid said in their press
10 release of 5/26, they need to make infrastructure
11 investments for more resilient, sustainable, and
12 smart system, more resources to support customers and
13 local communities, energy efficiency programs, and
14 investments to enable renewable energy, as well as
15 economic development proposals that will help build
16 cleaner, healthier communities.

17 They also said the existing New York
18 energy grid was not built with renewable energy
19 sources in mind. That's why we're proposing
20 investments in smart technology that will improve
21 reliability and enable us to connect more renewables,
22 like wind and solar to assist them more effectively,
23 efficiently, and safely.

24 To these points, I would be asking
25 NYSEG management, where they were for the last 20

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2 years. Now, when inflation is very high and energy
3 costs are through the roof, they state that
4 infrastructure investments are needed. All of these
5 recommendations for higher efficiency and
6 infrastructure improvements should have been in the
7 year 2000 plan.

8 The press release should have stated
9 that they want to build on all the changes in
10 infrastructure that they have accomplished up to this
11 point. But the press release doesn't say that. What
12 has NYSEG done up to now?

13 Will the federal infrastructure bill
14 that was passed by Congress help with any of the
15 costs that they want a 30% rate increase for? What
16 is the plan for the future? Will they accomplish
17 their goals by 2025, or 2030, or will they continue
18 to ask customers for more repeated 30% rate increases
19 in the future? What is their plan?

20 Other utilities are also asking for
21 rate increases now, based on higher energy costs.
22 But did NYSEG reduce rates when energy costs were
23 lower? Other than a single \$100 credit to vulnerable
24 customers, which was included in 2020 rating
25 agreement, which I assume was because of the

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2 pandemic, I couldn't find evidence for a total
3 reduction in gas and electric rates, except for one,
4 F.P.L., Florida Power and Light, reduced rates in
5 January of 2020 by an average of 4% and claimed that
6 F.P.L.'s typical bill was 30% lower than the U.S.
7 average.

8 That was the same year that NYSEG was
9 negotiating for higher rates, which were granted and
10 resulted in 8.6 increase over 3 years.

11 I quote from -- just another couple of
12 paragraphs. I quote from the Daily Energy Insider,
13 dated April 1st, 2020. And it said F.P.L. has been
14 able to lower rates due to the decreased natural gas
15 prices, has invested in ultra-efficient power plants,
16 solar energy facilities, and a variety of cutting-
17 edge technologies to reduce the amount of fuel it
18 needs to provide electricity.

19 It sounds to me like NYSEG is talking
20 today about initiating what F.P.L. accomplished two
21 years ago. And I ask why? Why now when inflation is
22 so high? Why doesn't NYSEG management team learn
23 from other utilities that are running more
24 efficiently? Why can't NYSEG be as efficient as
25 F.P.L. as an example, and sometimes reduce rates?

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2 If NYSEG would've reduced their rates
3 when energy costs were low, we might not object as
4 much to increasing our rates now. Thank you.

5 A.L.J. OVERTON: Thank you for your
6 comment.

7 Our next speaker is Taylor Wilkie. If
8 you called in, please hit star 3 on your telephone,
9 so we can recognize you and unmute you. It looks
10 like call-in user 14 has a hand raised.

11 MR. WHITE: They've been unmuted, your
12 Honor.

13 A.L.J. OVERTON: Oh, that was --.

14 MR. WHITE: That was what?

15 A.L.J. OVERTON: Taylor Wilkie?

16 MR. WHITE: Hello.

17 There's no one responding.

18 Is there anyone there?

19 MS. KUBIK: Yes, this is Diane from
20 Family and Children.

21 MR. WHITE: What's -- what's your last
22 name, Diane?

23 MS. KUBIK: Kubik, K-U-B-I-K.

24 MR. WHITE: Okay. We're looking for
25 who, your Honor?

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2 A.L.J. OVERTON: Taylor Wilkie.

3 MR. WHITE: Yeah. Not seeing anybody
4 with that -- with that name that -- with that raised
5 hand, your Honor.

6 A.L.J. OVERTON: Okay. So we will
7 come back to Taylor and move forward to Ruth
8 Marchetti -- Marchetti.

9 MS. MARCHETTI: Am I unmuted?

10 A.L.J. OVERTON: You are. Go ahead.

11 MS. MARCHETTI: All right. Thank you.

12 My name is Ruth Marchetti. And I live
13 in Penfield, New York. I'm currently president of
14 the Rochester Area Interfaith Climate Action, and the
15 chair of Rock X Climate Justice Task Force. Both of
16 these organizations make environmental justice a high
17 priority.

18 Personally, my husband and I are
19 greatly concerned about disorganized billing. It
20 would sometimes give us two bills in one month, one
21 large and one small, and occasionally skips a bill.
22 We've had so many problems with the app for reporting
23 our usage that we've given up on it.

24 In addition, we are still being billed
25 separately for our community solar membership even

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2 though New York mandated that consolidated billing
3 begin in April of 2021. These issues are mainly
4 annoyances, but they make me very concerned about
5 billing processes and customer service at RG&E.

6 Of greater importance to me is the
7 concern that the large rate hikes RG&E has requested
8 will worsen the already large energy burdens of low-
9 income people in our community. Instead of the 6% of
10 income that New York State says is a reasonable
11 expense for households, many of the lowest income
12 people, especially in predominantly Black and Brown
13 communities, pay between 10 and 25% of their income
14 for energy costs even as our summers get hotter, and
15 our winters get colder. But energy is a human right.

16 Also, as one who is deeply committed
17 to working to reduce the effects of climate change, I
18 oppose the funding of infrastructure and rebates that
19 would maintain the use of gas as an energy source
20 when we should be moving towards funding
21 electrification.

22 We need to focus funds on making
23 renewable energy, especially renewable heating
24 options affordable for everyone. Some ways to do
25 that include increasing the rebates for heat pump

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2 technologies, particularly for low- to moderate-
3 income households, making these rebates point of sale
4 so it's cheaper to get the technology we need,
5 provide weatherization and clean heating and cooling
6 improvements with options to pay back over time
7 through our energy bills, and install district
8 geothermal energy projects to make renewable heating
9 available to all utility customers.

10 I applaud RG&E for their willingness
11 to provide make-ready funding to upgrade electrical
12 panels to enable heat pump installations and initial
13 efforts to make E.V. charging more accessible for
14 low- to moderate-income households. But we have a
15 long way to go to make our energy system both
16 affordable and sustainable. Thank you.

17 A.L.J. OVERTON: Thank you for your
18 comment.

19 Our next speaker is Daryl Odhner.

20 MR. ODHNER: Okay. Can you hear me?

21 A.L.J. OVERTON: I can. Go ahead.

22 MR. ODHNER: Yeah, you must have
23 unmuted me. Great. Thank you for this opportunity
24 to weigh in on this forum. I appreciate these
25 opportunities to participate in our democratic

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2 system. Let me spell my name. It's D-A-R-Y-l.
3 Odhner is O-D-H-N-E-R.

4 I am a citizen of Chili, New York.
5 I'm the father of three daughters. I'm a husband and
6 grandfather to one. During the adult portion of my
7 nearly 70 years, I've been very concerned about our
8 human relationship to the natural world. I've been
9 concerned not only about climate change and concern
10 for survival, but also decline in quality of life.

11 I am a Sierra Club member and have
12 participated in a number -- in a number of ways with
13 our local climate solutions accelerator, the Finger
14 Lakes, Genesee. Two big focus areas of both of --
15 both of these groups are sustainable energy and also
16 environmental justice, by which we mean a concern
17 that marginalized people not bear a brunt of the
18 environmental harm done as a result of our fossil
19 fuel energy use.

20 It is clearly becoming obvious that we
21 need to change course in our use of energy. I am
22 opposed to increases in shareholder profits, while
23 energy burdens increase on moderate- and low-income
24 citizens. I'm opposed to continued investment in gas
25 infrastructure over the coming years.

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2 Gas pipelines will be retired before
3 they're paid off, leaving us with the bill. I'm
4 opposed to spending ratepayer dollars on rebates for
5 gas appliances and marketing for gas products. I
6 would like to see the utilities reduce gas sales and
7 greenhouse gas emissions in compliance with New
8 York's Climate Law, help make renewable energy
9 affordable to everyone, increase rebates for heat
10 pump technologies, particularly for low- and
11 moderate-income households, provide weatherization
12 and clean heating and cooling improvements with
13 options to pay back over time through energy bills.

14 I would also like to see the utilities
15 install district geothermal energy projects to make
16 renewable heating available to all utility customers.
17 I commend the utilities for their investments in
18 green energy thus far. And that's all I have to say.
19 Thank you very much.

20 A.L.J. OVERTON: Thank you for your
21 comment.

22 Our next speaker is Eric Zeise --
23 Zeise.

24 MR. ZEISE: Good morning.

25 A.L.J. OVERTON: I apologize.

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2 MR. ZEISE: Thank you for unmuting me.
3 Thank you very much for this opportunity to speak
4 about this rate case.

5 My name is Eric Zeise. I live in
6 Perinton, New York. Utilities really routinely
7 request significantly higher energy rates than they
8 are likely to receive with the hope that they can
9 negotiate a rate that exceeds their needs.

10 New York State has defined a
11 reasonable energy burden as 6% of one's household
12 expenses. According to the A.C.E.E.E., 37% of
13 Rochester residents and 44% of Black and Latino
14 Rochester residents pay between 10 and 25% of their
15 income for energy.

16 I have good friends with fixed income,
17 who are already juggling food versus heating in the
18 face of rising costs due to inflation. Do not make
19 the existing problem worse and disproportionately
20 affect low-income residents.

21 Stop expanding gas infrastructure that
22 will be retired before being paid off and become a
23 stranded asset. Why rely on fossil fuel
24 infrastructure with skyrocketing prices dictated by
25 global events when we can invest in locally

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2 controlled renewable energy, energy efficiency,
3 energy storage, and weatherization? Please look
4 beyond quarterly profits to become part of the
5 solution, rather than a major part of the problem.

6 The C.L.C.P.A. mandates a transition
7 to renewable energy resources. Federal and state
8 policy demand significant green investment -- green
9 energy investment to benefit L.M.I. communities.
10 Your reputation -- utility reputation demands
11 affordable energy prices for all the customers.

12 For many of my friends and relatives,
13 and for the great majority of our community
14 customers, upfront costs are the barrier to enjoying
15 significant savings and energy costs through
16 weatherization and clean heating and cooling
17 improvements.

18 I applaud your programs to enable
19 energy efficient heating and cooling, but we must
20 make renewable energy heating and cooling affordable
21 and become the inexpensive choice for everyone.

22 Please increase rebates for heat pump
23 technologies, particularly for L.M.I. households.
24 Please develop programs which point-of-sale rebates
25 that are paid through utility bills to eliminate the

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2 financial barriers for weatherization and clean
3 heating and cooling improvements. Please help to
4 encourage small- and mid-scale distributed solar
5 energy and storage installations that work well
6 within the existing grid infrastructure to both lower
7 -- lower overall energy demand and to increase
8 overall resiliency.

9 Thank you very much again for this
10 opportunity.

11 A.L.J. OVERTON: Thank you for your
12 comment.

13 Our next speaker is David Ruekberg.

14 MR. RUEKBERG: Yeah, hi. Thanks for
15 hosting this.

16 I live in Pittsford, New York, and I'm
17 a current RG&E customer. Thank you for the
18 opportunity to be heard.

19 The magnitude of the proposed rate
20 increases by about 18.1% for gas and 18.9 for
21 electric supply, according to my reading.

22 Such an increase is unmanageable for
23 large parts of our community, as people have already
24 noted, who are living on limited or fixed incomes,
25 and already stretched to the breaking point. While,

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2 I understand that a company needs to upgrade its
3 equipment, that's normally built into the cost of
4 doing business or funded by minimal increases unless
5 you're a monopoly.

6 The proposed upgrades are not only
7 unnecessarily expensive, but they're misdirected and
8 immoral in their disregard for the peril of global
9 heating. RG&E needs to upgrade equipment. It should
10 put all of its efforts into renewable and non-
11 greenhouse gas producing sources. It's probable that
12 such sources would save money over time versus fossil
13 fuel sources.

14 The peril's not in some distant future
15 time and not even at the beginning; we're in its
16 midst. It's been public knowledge for more than 30
17 years that human-made global warming threatens life
18 on the planet. If we were threatened by a war, by a
19 foreign dictator, we wouldn't hesitate to take
20 action.

21 If floods destroyed our properties,
22 we'd act quickly to remediate and adapt. Of course,
23 since remediation is far more expensive than
24 prevention, we can't just adapt to this threat.

25

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2 Although properties can be rebuilt, the lives that
3 were ruined or lost can't just be patched up.

4 RG&E's intention to replace and expand
5 natural gas infrastructure and invest in so-called
6 green hydrogen is misdirected and blind to this
7 peril. We're behind schedule on reducing emission of
8 greenhouse gases, including a more potent methane
9 contained in natural gas. Why would we continue to
10 invest in such a losing proposition?

11 If my furnace was leaking carbon
12 monoxide into my house, I wouldn't turn up the heat
13 and hope that things got better tomorrow. I'd
14 replace the energy source.

15 Since I live in Pittsford, I've had
16 the opportunity to join a community solar -- solar
17 program, and last month started receiving electricity
18 from 100% solar power. This is through an ESCO, so
19 RG&E is only the delivery vehicle, not the supplier,
20 but it could be the supplier.

21 RG&E should look to the future and see
22 that renewable energies such as solar and wind are
23 our only hope. If they want to invest in new
24 infrastructure, renewables are, in fact, less
25 expensive in the long run than fossil fuels.

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2 Costs would come down if they invested
3 or -- and/or credited wind, solar, heat pumps, and so
4 forth, rather than this unconscionable rate increase.
5 Thank you for giving me time to speak.

6 A.L.J. OVERTON: Thank you for your
7 comment, Mr. Ruekberg.

8 Our next speaker is Jeff Eisenhart.

9 MR. WHITE: Your line has been
10 unmuted, Mr. Eisenhart.

11 MR. EISENHART: Good afternoon. My
12 name is Jeff Eisenhart. I live in Rochester and I am
13 disabled.

14 I am a delegate of the Monroe County
15 Benefit -- Workers Benefit Council. And in that
16 capacity, I'm here today to speak on behalf of more
17 than 25,000 low-income workers and their families
18 throughout Monroe County.

19 The Workers Benefit Council expresses
20 our apathetic opposition to RG&E and NYSEG's
21 shameless \$580 million rate hike requests.
22 Furthermore, we demand that the Public Service
23 Commission do its job and deny this unaffordable and
24 unsustainable rate increase.

25

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2 We are home health aides, nurses'
3 aides working in nursing homes, childcare workers,
4 food services, and retail workers. They started
5 calling us essential workers during the pandemic, but
6 we don't get paid enough for the essentials, like
7 home energy. And so adding another \$20 to \$22 to our
8 monthly bill is absolutely out of the question.

9 For over 12 years, we have called on
10 the Public Service Commission to follow its own legal
11 mandate, to, quote, protect the utility customers
12 from the potential abuse of monopoly powers, end
13 quote, to protect the rights of New Yorkers who
14 ensure -- while ensuring access to reliable and low-
15 cost utility services.

16 But all during this time, the P.S.C.
17 has broken them -- this mandate, choosing to
18 guarantee a certain rate of return on investment for
19 the utility monopoly shareholders. The guaranteed
20 profit was 9% last time we heard.

21 As rate -- as a result of the state
22 guaranteeing these exorbitant profits for energy
23 monopolies compounding with stagnant wages and fixed
24 incomes not keeping up, New York has seen 300,000
25 utility customers being shut off each year, 60,000 of

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2 those right here in our region shut off by Avangrid -
3 - Avangrid subsidiaries, RG&E and NYSEG.

4 But Avangrid's parent company in
5 Spain, Iberdrola, gets \$4.4 billion in profits from
6 the shareholders and paid its C.E.O. \$10 million year
7 -- and pays its C.E.O. \$10 million year after year.

8 During the pandemic, an emergency
9 measure -- the state instituted -- as an emergency
10 measure, the state instituted a moratorium on
11 shutoffs, which our R.W.B.C. has already been
12 demanding for past 12 years through petitions,
13 letters, and testifying in public hearings.

14 However, at the beginning 2022, the
15 State lifted this moratorium so that shutoffs can
16 begin again. The Covid-19 pandemic made it worse,
17 with thousands losing their jobs, and hundreds of
18 small businesses closing down. So it's not time to
19 allow shutoffs. It's time to stop the shutoffs for
20 forever for those in need.

21 During the pandemic, according to
22 RG&E, our own -- RG&E's owned 2020 and 2021 financial
23 reports, they successfully increased their net
24 revenue by 32% and increased their stockholder wealth
25 by over 27%. We know how they did this.

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2 Now, 13% of all utility customers owe
3 more than \$2.1 billion, double what was owed for same
4 time in 2021.

5 R.W.B.C. here -- is here today again,
6 after more than a decade of these hearings and
7 petitions, to continue to demand a permanent year-
8 round moratorium on all shut offs for low- and
9 moderate-income ratepayers.

10 This isn't just about financial debt.
11 Some of us are paying with our lives and our health.
12 Every winter in central and western New York, there
13 is a predictable death toll for those due to house
14 fires and carbon monoxide poisoning of people who
15 have resorted to unsafe heating methods after being
16 shut off by RG&E, NYSEG, and their shareholders owned
17 companies -- utilities.

18 Every summer, the number of
19 individuals in the U.S. ending up in the emergency
20 rooms and even dying, heat-related deaths kill more
21 than -- kill more people than hurricanes, floods,
22 tornadoes, and earthquakes combined. It is a silent
23 killer. There is no report of the deaths from the
24 heat waves that the P.S.C. is allowing -- allow.
25

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2 The same way we need heating in the
3 winter, we also need air conditioning in the summer
4 months as well as both in central -- as well because
5 both are essential to people's health and wellbeing,
6 not to mention from keeping insulin refrigerated and
7 keeping breathing machines running, et cetera. That
8 is why we need a permanent year-round moratorium on
9 all shutoffs for low- to moderate-income ratepayers.

10 On July 28 of this year, the W.B.C.
11 just submitted a petition to the P.S.C.'s offices in
12 Albany by fax, containing over 1,300 signatures and a
13 dozen endorsement letters from the faith base --
14 local faith-based groups and nonprofits who are
15 attempting to address the needs of the poor in our
16 community.

17 The petition demands were an active
18 permanent year-round moratorium on the utility
19 shutoffs for New York residents whose incomes are at
20 least -- are at or below 250% of the federal poverty
21 level, direct RG&E and NYSEG to cancel arrears for
22 their customers who increased -- whose incomes are at
23 or below 250% of the poverty guidelines, and
24 transition New York's state energy grid to 100%
25 renewable energy by 2030 while ensuring services --

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2 service is both affordable and accessible to even the
3 lowest income residents.

4 Dozens of people in our communities
5 have called the P.S.C.'s offices to confirm that the
6 petitions have been received and processed.
7 Eventually, your staff in the Public Affairs Office
8 told us they had been received and they were
9 forwarded to Secretary Michelle Phillips.

10 The number of people -- then numbers
11 of people called her directly and she eventually
12 indicated that they had been received. What we saw
13 happen next, the state government planned a debt
14 forgiveness for those in debt, which was our second
15 demand. But what really is -- what they really did
16 was pay off the utility debts with \$567 million that
17 came out of our taxes, except for the 6% utility --
18 utility ...

19 But somehow, they are allowed to
20 actually bill us for this 6% through additional
21 surcharges to pay off our debt. The P.S.C. could not
22 make utilities affordable -- could make utilities
23 affordable and environmentally sustainable in the
24 interest of the poor and working people throughout
25 New York State if it was truly a priority for them.

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2 This year, the Public Service
3 Commission has another chance to live to its legal
4 mandate and do what it -- what it was created to do,
5 serve the public. Monroe County Workers Benefit
6 Council is here today to demand that the P.S.C. deny
7 RG&E and NYSEG's rate hike requests outright and take
8 steps -- the next steps to lower rates, enact a
9 permanent year-round moratorium on shutoffs for New
10 York residents whose income are at or below 250%
11 poverty -- federal poverty level, transition New York
12 -- and transition New York State's energy grid to a
13 100% renewable energy by 2030 while ensuring services
14 are available -- both affordable and available to
15 even the lowest-income residents.

16 Thank you.

17 There are other people on our line who
18 would like to speak when -- at the end.

19 A.L.J. OVERTON: Okay. Thank you for
20 your comment. And I will come back to the other
21 people once we get through the list of registered
22 participants.

23 So our next speaker is Zoe Natchez
24 (phonetic spelling). Zoe, if you have called in,
25 could you please hit start 3 on your phone so that we

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2 can recognize you? Or if you have called in under a
3 different user name, can you please raise your hand?

4 MR. WHITE: I see no new raised hands,
5 your Honor.

6 A.L.J. OVERTON: Okay. So we'll come
7 back Zoe.

8 Our next speaker is Janhavi Verma.

9 MS. VERMA: Am I audible?

10 A.L.J. OVERTON: You are. Go ahead.

11 MS. VERMA: Hi. All right. So thank
12 you so much for the opportunity to participate in the
13 democratic process. I am Janhavi. I am a student at
14 R.I.T. and I was a resident of Rochester, New York.

15 And I'm here to endorse the demands of
16 the Workers Benefit Council, as well as all of the,
17 you know, community members who have spoken today,
18 who are -- who are asking for renewable energy
19 sources, who are asking for lowered costs to
20 ratepayers, and for the moratorium on utility
21 shutoffs for people who are below -- at or below 250%
22 of the federal poverty level.

23 But before I start talking about any
24 of that, I want to just say, as a student, I'm -- I'm
25 studying technology. I'm studying access to

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2 technology. And I'm really concerned about the way
3 that this process can exclude people who do not have
4 access to, you know, the technology needed to connect
5 to these WebEx meetings or to call up or even to find
6 a link to register.

7 Because many people do not have access
8 to an email address, do not have access to an
9 internet connection, do not have access to technology
10 that's powered by these resources that are getting
11 shut off right now as we speak.

12 And I really think that there has to
13 be a more accessible way to get to people who are
14 most affected by these utility shutoffs, to
15 participate and voice their concerns. That's --
16 that's what I had to say.

17 But additionally, I strongly endorse
18 the demands from the Monroe County Workers Benefit
19 Council. I -- I -- I strongly support enacting a
20 permanent year-round moratorium on utility shutoffs
21 for customers who are at or below 250% of the federal
22 poverty level. I strongly endorse canceling the
23 utility that's put these households, as well as
24 transitioning to a 100% renewable energy grid by
25

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2 2030, while maintaining the rates at a level that is
3 affordable to even the lowest-income customers.

4 I strongly support all the people that
5 spoke about getting on to solar and encouraging
6 everyone, you know, to get into that. I strongly
7 support all of these voices, and thank you so much.

8 A.L.J. OVERTON: Thank you for your
9 comment, Ms. Verma.

10 Our next speaker is Peter Collinge.

11 MR. COLLINGE: Yes, am I coming
12 through?

13 A.L.J. OVERTON: You are. Go ahead
14 with your comment.

15 MR. COLLINGE: My name is Peter
16 Collinge. I live in Henrietta, New York, and I'm an
17 RG&E customer. And I appreciate the opportunity to
18 speak. Like most, I am concerned about the proposed
19 rate increases. I am also very concerned about
20 climate change, and will address that area.

21 I believe that in 20 years, our energy
22 systems must be based on sustainably-sourced
23 electricity, rather than combustion of any type.
24 Therefore, I'm glad that these utilities are taking
25 some small steps to encourage electrification and

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2 conservation, such as promoting E.V. charging and
3 heat pumps and weatherization. And those efforts
4 need to be dramatically expanded.

5 But the utility proposals are headed
6 in the wrong direction in their gas systems. While
7 replacing leaking gas lines may make sense for
8 environmental and safety reasons, taxpayers should --
9 excuse me -- not subsidize any expansion of the gas
10 network, or any incentives to use more gas, which
11 would work against current state and federal climate
12 goals.

13 If the utilities wish to gamble on the
14 economic viability of a white elephant like gas
15 expansion, let them do that at their own expense.

16 And please forbid any introduction of
17 hydrogen gas into the natural gas system. While
18 there may be some reasonable industrial usage for
19 hydrogen, a study recently published in the journal
20 Joule showed -- showed that heating with hydrogen is
21 both less efficient and more costly than using
22 electric heat pumps. But of course, adding hydrogen
23 to the existing natural gas system will tend to make
24 gas pipes brittle, an outcome we surely want to
25 avoid.

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2 Finally, the utilities need to make
3 connecting renewable power to the grid easier and
4 more economical. For example, though my rooftop
5 solar panels generate the most extra electricity
6 during peak power use times like sunny summer
7 afternoons, and those are times when the electric
8 rates are the highest, at the end of the year, I'm
9 only paid for any extra power generated during the
10 year at the very minimal rate. That system needs to
11 be changed to better incentivize electricity from
12 renewable sources.

13 And in general, we need to promote
14 beneficial electrification in all forms. Thank you.

15 A.L.J. OVERTON: Thank you for your
16 comment, Mr. Collinge.

17 Our next speaker is Beverly Usher. If
18 you have called in, Beverly, please hit star 3 on
19 your telephone so that we can recognize you and
20 unmute you.

21 MR. WHITE: I'm not sure what the
22 person that has the raised hand said her name was.
23 Do you want to unmute them or --?

24 A.L.J. OVERTON: I thought it was
25 Diane, but we can check with her.

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2 MR. WHITE: I don't see Beverly
3 raising her hand and I don't see her in the list of
4 the computer users.

5 A.L.J. OVERTON: Okay. Let's check in
6 with call-in user 14.

7 MR. WHITE: Okay. Thank you.

8 Go ahead you've been unmuted. Call-in
9 user, you've been unmuted.

10 MS. KUBIK: I think you have the wrong
11 participant.

12 MR. WHITE: What is your name?

13 MS. KUBIK: This is Diane, again.

14 MR. WHITE: Okay.

15 MS. KUBIK: Diane Kubik. I was just
16 listening. I wasn't going to participate in.

17 MR. WHITE: Okay. You can lower your
18 hand by hitting star 3, if you don't mind.

19 MS. KUBIK: I'm just on the phone.
20 I'm not on --.

21 MR. WHITE: Right. You -- yeah, I'm
22 going to lower your hand for you. Thank you.

23 MS. KUBIK: All right. Thank you.

24 MR. WHITE: Okay. Your Honor, we have
25 no raised hands at this time.

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2 A.L.J. OVERTON: Okay. So we've gone
3 through all of the registered participants. I'm
4 going to return back to the beginning and go through
5 those who were not available when we went through the
6 first time.

7 So Mark Wescott, if you have called
8 in, Mr. Wescott, if you could please hit star 3 on
9 your telephone so that we can recognize you and
10 unmute your line.

11 MR. WHITE: No raised hands, your
12 Honor.

13 A.L.J. OVERTON: Okay. Taylor Wilkie?
14 I don't see Taylor on the list. So Taylor if you
15 called in, if you could please hit star 3 on your
16 telephone?

17 MR. WHITE: Nothing, your Honor.

18 A.L.J. OVERTON: Okay. Zoe Natchez?
19 Again, if you have called in, please hit star 3 so
20 that we can recognize you and unmute your line.

21 Seeing no raised hands, I will go to
22 the last participant and that was Beverly Usher.
23 Okay. So we have gone through the list of registered
24 participants.

25

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2 We will now open up the hearing.

3 Anyone in attendance who would like to speak, but did
4 not pre-register to do so, if you would like to make
5 a statement, please click the raised hand icon in the
6 bottom right corner of your screen or, if you have
7 called in, please press star 3 on your telephone.

8 Either option will enable us to
9 recognize you and unmute you so you can make your
10 statement.

11 MR. WHITE: We have two raised hands,
12 your Honor, who would -- I see Jeff has got his hand
13 raised and you did call in, Jeff. Would you like me
14 to unmute Jeff?

15 A.L.J. OVERTON: Yeah, please. He
16 indicated there are -- there are some people with him
17 that would like to make statements.

18 MR. WHITE: Go ahead.

19 MR. RENTZEL: Okay. My name is Jere
20 Rentzel and I live in Henrietta.

21 A.L.J. OVERTON: Jere?

22 MR. RENTZEL: Yeah.

23 A.L.J. OVERTON: I'm just going to
24 interrupt you for a moment, please. Could you just
25 please spell your name for the court reporter?

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2 MR. RENTZEL: Sure. Jere.

3 A.L.J. OVERTON: Thank you.

4 MR. RENTZEL: J-E-R-E, Rentzel, R-E-N-
5 T-Z-E-L.

6 A.L.J. OVERTON: Thank you. Go ahead.

7 MR. RENTZEL: I live in Henrietta, and
8 I'm retired, and I'm here with the Monroe County
9 Workers Benefit Council. The Eastern Service Workers
10 Association members have suffered big time from the
11 pandemic, but RG&E's profits went to 28% during that
12 same period of time.

13 Well, me and all my retired friends'
14 savings are down 28% and we can't afford any rate
15 hike. And we don't believe that RG&E needs to raise
16 any more money from its customers to finance its
17 green efforts.

18 A.L.J. OVERTON: Thank you.

19 Is there anybody else with you who
20 would like to make a statement at this time?

21 MR. RENTZEL: Yes.

22 A.L.J. OVERTON: Sure. I just ask
23 that you please spell your name for the court
24 reporter before you begin your comment.

25

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2 MS. HAYES: A-R-L-E-N-E H-A-Y-E-S,
3 Arlene Hayes. I live in Rochester and I'm retired
4 from food service. I'm here today with the Monroe
5 County Workers Benefit Council, or W.B.C. for short,
6 representing more than 25,000 low-paid working people
7 and families throughout Monroe County.

8 The W.B.C. opposes any and all rate
9 hikes on our utility bills as it would only cause
10 more poverty and economic inequality as well as pain
11 and suffering in our community.

12 Avangrid states that their rationale
13 for this rate hike is implementing their green energy
14 development plan called Reliable Energy New York.
15 While W.B.C. supports all sincere efforts to
16 transition New York's energy grid to 100% renewable
17 energy, we take exception to the Utilities' claim
18 that they must raise our bills in order to do that.

19 Their claim is especially disingenuous
20 (sic) and -- I'm sorry -- genuine in the light of the
21 fact that RG&E increased their revenues and profits
22 during the pandemic by 32% and 27%, respectively.
23 And this, while the numbers of ratepayers statewide
24 who were unable to afford their utility bills doubled

25

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2 to 13% of all households, collectively, owing over
3 \$2.1 billion.

4 The claim that the only pathway to
5 green energy is higher bills for ratepayers is a lie.
6 The concept of sustainable development was defined
7 and accepted globally at the 1987 World Commission on
8 Environment and Development Conference as, quote,
9 development that meets the needs of the present
10 without compromising the ability of future
11 generations to meet their own needs, unquote.

12 In other words, sustainability
13 includes meeting the people's needs here and now in a
14 way that allows our children and grandchildren to do
15 the same. Therefore, sustainability must be
16 economically viable and socially inclusive and
17 equitable, as well as ecologically responsible.

18 In 2050, all 193 member states of the
19 United Nations unanimously adopted the 2030 agenda
20 for sustainable development with its 17 sustainable
21 development goals or S.D.G.s. That includes the
22 U.S.A. Later that same year, the Monroe County
23 Workers Benefit Council officially endorsed the 2030
24 agenda because it is consistent with our program
25 going back 40 years.

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2 Sustainable development goal number
3 one is end poverty in all its forms everywhere. Goal
4 number seven is ensure access to affordable,
5 reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all.
6 Goal number 11 is make cities and human settlements
7 inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable.

8 While we take urgent action to fight
9 climate change, we must do so in a way that
10 eliminates economic and social inequality. There is
11 nothing sustainable about a multibillion-dollar
12 energy holding company like Iberdrola Avangrid, owner
13 of RG&E, NYSEG, paying for their so-called green
14 energy initiative by raising customers' bills over
15 \$20 a month.

16 If it is not affordable to all utility
17 customers, then it may be green, but it's not
18 sustainable. There is nothing sustainable about
19 forcing us to -- to let them put their smart meters
20 in our home to charge us more money for using
21 electricity at peak hours of the day, such as when a
22 working mom gets home from work at 5:00 p.m. and must
23 cook dinner for her kids, do the laundry while they
24 get started on their homework.

25

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2 And -- and if we choose to opt out of
3 their smart meter program, they will add an
4 additional \$12 a month to our bill, all in the name
5 of going green. While it may be green, this type of
6 profit-driven environmentalism is creating more
7 poverty in our community and so we say it is not
8 sustainable.

9 There is nothing sustainable about
10 deregulated energy market that allows the largest
11 investment bank in the world to drive up the price of
12 a life necessity such as heat in the winter when the
13 weather experts predict extreme winter weather on the
14 horizon and they all start buying gas futures,
15 expecting to make a windfall profit.

16 When the P.S.C. throws hundreds of
17 thousands of our family under the bus by allowing
18 utility rate hikes in the name of going green, we
19 must fight for sustainable development and not
20 policies that have the majority for the benefit of
21 the already wealthy and powerful.

22 We, the Monroe County Workers Benefit
23 Council, demand the P.S.C. and the New York State
24 Government set an example for others to follow and
25 adhere to the letter and the spirit of the 2030

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2 agenda for sustainable development, and transition
3 our state energy grid to a clean renewable modern
4 energy grid by 2030 for the sake of our children and
5 grandchildren and for generations to come.

6 We demand that the P.S.C. achieve this
7 while ensuring that utility rates remain affordable
8 for even the lowest-income ratepayers. To achieve
9 this, the P.S.C. must take whatever action is
10 necessary to ensure that those who have been
11 profiteering off our energy grid and energy market be
12 required to foot the bill for the transition to
13 renewable energy.

14 They have the money to cover the
15 necessary cost. We do not. We have tightened our
16 belts year after year after year. It's time for them
17 to share the burden. Thank you.

18 A.L.J. OVERTON: Thank you for your
19 comment.

20 Is there anybody else with you who
21 would like to make a comment, today?

22 MR. EISENHART: Yes, one more person.

23 A.L.J. OVERTON: One more. Okay.
24 Great. Go ahead, please.

25

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2 MR. EISENHART: He's coming up. Hold
3 on.

4 MR. PROUTFORD: Hello.

5 A.L.J. OVERTON: Hi. Please state and
6 spell your name for the court reporter.

7 MR. PROUTFORD: Yes; my name is
8 Morrison, M-O-R-R-I-S-O-N. Do you need my last name?

9 A.L.J. OVERTON: Yes, please.

10 MR. PROUTFORD: P-R-O-U-T-F-O-R-D.

11 THE REPORTER: Thank you.

12 A.L.J. OVERTON: Thank you. Go ahead.

13 MR. PROUTFORD: Good afternoon. My
14 name is Morrison Proutford and I live in Rochester.
15 And I am disabled. I am a -- a former security
16 guard, and I am here with a Monroe County Workers
17 Benefit Council.

18 Okay. I'll try and make this quick,
19 but I -- I got multiple scenarios of -- of my
20 grievance and I -- I'll be very quick with this.

21 Number one, I graduated from high
22 school in -- in 1999. In doing so, I lived in a
23 household that couldn't keep our energy on. So I
24 live and graduated top of my class in high school,
25

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2 living in my school where the only place I had an
3 energy and heat.

4 And my -- my other thing is being able
5 to afford RG&E bills, I was directly affected by what
6 is -- what's been happening with RG&E and their rate
7 increases over the years. In 2014, I survived a
8 heinous crime because someone needed some money to --
9 to pay their RG&E bill. So in detail, I -- I had a -
10 - I have a bullet lodged in my head and a bullet next
11 to my heart and I have one into my stomach. And then
12 -- which put me in a coma for a year. I survived
13 that and -- and they are sentencing the person who
14 committed a crime, exact words were, I'll do anything
15 possible to make sure my mom don't have to struggle
16 keeping RG&E on.

17 And I'm -- I'm not the only one who
18 has -- who has gone through this in a -- in a City of
19 Rochester lately. On the news, there is -- there is
20 a too many accounts where the person be sentenced for
21 a crime and sitting in front a Judge, in front of a
22 courtroom, I'll do anything to make sure that my
23 parents or my mom, my sister have -- have lights on.

24 And -- and we're -- we're talking
25 about people who have committed murders. So with

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2 that, my other comment is we the citizens of
3 Rochester help RG&E arbitrarily become the
4 billionaires that they are. So to ask for continuous
5 rate hike is irresponsible when a billion-dollar
6 company such as RG&E and Iberdrola have done nothing
7 to be socially responsible to put back into the
8 community has made them the billionaires that they
9 are.

10 So we're not asking for the stop or
11 the rate hikes and demanding RG&E to heat, to the
12 United Nations S.D.G.s. We are here because we are
13 tired of it and we are making demands. We are
14 demanding this. So you know, this is just not -- I
15 don't know how serious I have to be, but we're --
16 we're -- we're not asking anymore. We're going to do
17 whatever it takes to make sure that these demands are
18 -- are taken serious.

19 A.L.J. OVERTON: Okay. Thank you for
20 your comment.

21 I see that Taylor Wilkie has joined.
22 Since you pre-registered to comment, we're going to
23 unmute your line.

24 MR. WHITE: I'm not able to, your
25 Honor, for some reason.

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2 A.L.J. OVERTON: Okay.

3 MR. WHITE: I'm able to -- I'm able to
4 unmute others, but not Taylor's line. Might be on
5 their end? Can you hear me, your Honor?

6 A.L.J. OVERTON: I can.

7 MR. WHITE: Okay.

8 A.L.J. OVERTON: Taylor, can you
9 unmute your computer and see -- and we can see if
10 that works because we are unable to mute you at the
11 point?

12 MR. WHITE: Your Honor, I'd made
13 several attempts to unmute and mute, but I could do
14 everybody else, just for some reason --.

15 A.L.J. OVERTON: Okay. So Taylor, if
16 you could hear us, if you could try logging off Webex
17 and then either logging back in through your computer
18 or calling in because we are unable to mute -- unmute
19 your line at this moment?

20 MR. WHITE: Yup, they just -- they
21 just -- they've -- they logged out.

22 A.L.J. OVERTON: All right.

23 MR. WHITE: Let's see if they log back
24 in.

25

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2 A.L.J. OVERTON: That sounds great.

3 Is there anybody else -- I don't see any other hand,
4 do you, Joe?

5 MR. WHITE: Alicia Landis, your Honor.

6 A.L.J. OVERTON: Okay. Alicia Landis?

7 MS. LANDIS: Good afternoon, Your
8 Honors. Can you hear me?

9 A.L.J. OVERTON: We can. Go ahead.

10 MS. LANDIS: My name is Alicia Landis,
11 and I am a staff attorney and the direct services
12 supervisor with the Public Utility Law Project of New
13 York, or PULP.

14 PULP is a 40-year-old non-profit with
15 a mission of educating, advocating, and litigating on
16 behalf of New York State's low-income utility
17 customers. PULP thanks the Department of Public
18 Service for the opportunity to testify in relation to
19 these NYSEG and RG&E's electric and gas rate cases.
20 PULP is an active party in all four cases and we
21 filed expert testimony on September 26.

22 PULP has several concerns it has
23 expanded upon in our written testimony. When the
24 companies filed on May 26, they proposed double-digit
25 increases in revenues across the companies. These

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2 proposed increases would put further strain on
3 ratepayers, particularly low-income customers.

4 PULP has pulled financial statistics
5 from the New York State Community Action
6 Association's 2022 poverty report, the United Way's
7 ALICE project, and the New York State Department of
8 Education's county statistics. The reality is that
9 people are struggling -- struggling financially.

10 For example, in Monroe County, 14.1%
11 of residents live in poverty. If you add in families
12 in the category of working poor, then approximately
13 42.1% of residents of Monroe County are -- are unable
14 to pay all their bills and must often choose between
15 which bills remain unpaid at the end of the month.
16 Or they may have to choose between buying groceries
17 for the week or paying their utility bills.

18 In the City of Rochester, the
19 statistics are even more dire with 30.4% of Rochester
20 residents living in poverty, which includes 17.3% of
21 the city's senior citizens, as well as, 48.2% of
22 children residing in Rochester living in poverty.

23 NYSEG's own collections activity
24 reports show that as of July 2022, 106,328
25 residential customers are behind on their bills by 60

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2 days or more, for a total of \$58,698,477 in
3 residential arrears.

4 RG&E's collections activity reports
5 show that as of July 2022, 65,274 residential
6 customers are behind on their bills by 60 days or
7 more. This equates to a total \$43,664,256 in
8 residential arrears. Neither NYSEG nor RG&E have
9 updated these numbers for August of 2022.

10 The Commission has set an important
11 target for affordability with a goal that no low-
12 income customer will spend more than 6% of their
13 income on energy. Even before any rate increases
14 that may result from the companies' filings, low-
15 income customers in these territories are already
16 spending much more than 6% of their income on energy
17 bills.

18 PULP's testimony shows that the
19 average low-income NYSEG customers spends 9.7% of
20 their income on energy. This is 62% higher than the
21 targets set by the Commission. Our testimony also
22 shows that the average low-income RG&E customer
23 spends 9.2% of their income on energy. This is 52%
24 higher than the target for affordability.

25

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2 These energy burdens may be even more
3 exaggerated in disadvantaged communities across the
4 companies' territories which is not even discussed in
5 the companies' filing.

6 The effects of the Covid-19 pandemic
7 are still heavily felt across the companies'
8 territories. Every day ratepayers are already
9 struggling with bills that their -- or that are
10 unaffordable. In these unprecedented times, PULP
11 asks the Commission to scrutinize NYSEG and RG&E's
12 rate requests to make sure that the rates customers
13 are paying are just, reasonable, affordable, and
14 fair. Thank you.

15 A.L.J. OVERTON: Thank you for your
16 comment.

17 I -- I see that Taylor Wilkie has
18 joined again. Joe, could you please try unmuting
19 that line again?

20 MS. WILKIE: Can you hear me?

21 MR. WHITE: There we go.

22 A.L.J. OVERTON: We can. Thank you
23 for calling back in.

24 MS. WILKIE: Okay. Sorry about that.

25

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2 A.L.J. OVERTON: It's okay. Please go
3 ahead. Sorry for the -- the technical issue.

4 MS. WILKIE: No problem. Okay. So my
5 name is Taylor Wilkie. And two years ago, my family
6 was getting our oil furnace checked out and the
7 inspector told us that our furnace had burnt a hole
8 in itself and would be inoperable in the coming fall
9 because of the series fire hazard -- fire hazard it
10 posed.

11 So my parents decided that, instead of
12 investing in another expensive furnace, especially
13 with our atmosphere in desperate need of reduction in
14 carbon emissions and the growing prices in heating
15 oil, that they would invest in renewable energy
16 instead. They chose to work with a company in our
17 area, Geotherm --.

18 THE REPORTER: Mrs. Wilkie?

19 MS. WILKIE: Yeah.

20 THE REPORTER: Mrs. Wilkie. Hi. This
21 is the court reporter. Can I -- can I please get the
22 spelling of your last name, please?

23 MS. WILKIE: Sure. It's W-I-L-K-I-E.

24 THE REPORTER: Thank you.

25 MS. WILKIE: Yeah, no problem.

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2 So we chose to work with a company in
3 our area called Geotherm from Warsaw, New York in
4 Wyoming County. And they were able to bundle a small
5 solar panel and horizontal heat pump installation
6 package for our home. And before the installation of
7 geothermal and solar energy, our utilities included
8 heating oil, propane, and electric, estimated
9 conservatively to be around \$6,000 each year to have
10 hot water, heat, a propane fireplace, and electricity
11 and heating in the small barn and office space behind
12 our home.

13 In comparison, now with geothermal and
14 solar energy fully installed, our utilities are
15 comprised of only an electric bill, which is higher
16 to provide heat in the winter, but non-existent in
17 the summer due to the solar panels that we have
18 creating more energy than we consume, despite adding
19 central cooling -- central cooling system that was
20 established with geothermal.

21 Therefore, our average electricity
22 cost over the course of the year now is between
23 \$1,000 and \$1,500, meaning that at the most
24 conservative estimate of savings annually in this
25

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2 shift to renewable energy, we have saved \$4,500 a
3 year.

4 In the same way that installing an oil
5 heating system is expensive, so is installing a
6 renewable one. My family was fortunate enough to be
7 able to afford the shift, but this needs to be an
8 option that is successful to all people.

9 NYSEG and RG&E must utilize their
10 billions of ratepayer dollars to shift away from gas
11 and oil infrastructure and toward renewable energy
12 implementation, introducing regular energy audits for
13 cleaner heating and cooling improvement in homes and
14 businesses, district geothermal projects, and
15 increase the rebates for heat pump technologies,
16 especially for low- to moderate-income households.

17 Clean energy, cleaner homes, and a
18 cleaner atmosphere should not be benefits that are
19 only afforded to middle, upper, and upper-class
20 families. The right to a healthy life and a
21 sustainable future is a basic human right that
22 should be afforded to all people. Thank you.

23 A.L.J. OVERTON: Thank you for your
24 comment, Ms. Wilkie.

25

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2 Is there anybody else on the line who
3 would make -- like to make a comment? Again, please
4 either raise your hand or hit star 3 on your
5 telephone if you called in today.

6 MR. WHITE: I don't see any raised
7 hands, your Honor.

8 A.L.J. OVERTON: Okay. Seeing no
9 other raised hands, Commissioner Maggiore has joined
10 us today, so I want to pause for a moment and see if
11 he would like to make any comments.

12 COMMISSIONER MAGGIORE: Hi. Thank
13 you, your Honor. I -- I've heard every comment made
14 today. I've been listening intently. And I -- I
15 just wanted to thank everybody who has taken the time
16 to participate in this public hearing.

17 I know that the public feedback on
18 rate cases such as this are very important to, you
19 know, my own consideration that, but I know that
20 that's the case for my colleagues in the P.S.C. as
21 well.

22 So I've been listening intently. I
23 appreciate the thoughtful and passionate comments
24 that I've heard. And again, I'd like to thank
25 everybody for coming out today.

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2 So your Honor, thank you very much for
3 allowing me the opportunity to say hello.

4 A.L.J. OVERTON: Thank you,
5 Commissioner Maggiore.

6 Since we have no more commenters,
7 we're going to wrap up the hearing for today. I want
8 to thank everyone for their comments today. This
9 concludes our hearing for this afternoon.

10 I would like to remind anyone
11 listening that you may also submit comments by the
12 other means described earlier in the hearing and in
13 the August 19th notice of public statement hearing.

14 In addition to this afternoon's
15 hearing, we will be holding an additional public
16 statement hearing this evening at 5:00 p.m. and again
17 on October 18th, at both 1:00 and 5:00 p.m.

18 Judge Bergen and I thank everyone for
19 their interest here today. We also thank
20 Commissioner Maggiore for participating, our consumer
21 services office for administering this session, and
22 our court reporter.

23 The -- the public statement hearing is
24 now concluded and we are off the record.

25 THE REPORTER: We are off the record.

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(The hearing concluded at 2:21 p.m.)

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2 STATE OF NEW YORK

3 I, ANTHONY MCCLAIN, do hereby certify that the foregoing
4 was reported by me, in the cause, at the time and place,
5 as stated in the caption hereto, at Page 1 hereof; that
6 the foregoing typewritten transcription consisting of
7 pages 1 through 65, is a true record of all proceedings
8 had at the hearing.

9 IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto
10 subscribed my name, this the 4th day of October, 2022.

11

12 ANTHONY MCCLAIN, Reporter

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