

1 10/18/2022 - NYSEG - 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 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 the 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

21 PUBLIC STATEMENT HEARING

22 DATE: October 18, 2022 at 5:02 p.m.

23 VENUE: WebEx

24 BEFORE: A.L.J. ERIKA BERGEN

25 A.L.J. LINDSEY OVERTON

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2 (The hearing commenced at 5:02 p.m.)

3 THE REPORTER: We are on the record.

4 A.L.J. OVERTON: Okay. Off the record  
5 just for a second. Before we go --

6 (Off the record / on the record.)

7 A.L.J. OVERTON: We are on the record.

8 I call Case 22-E-0317 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 electric service.

12 Case 22-G-0318 proceeding on motion of  
13 the Commission as to the rates, charges, rules and  
14 regulations of New York State Electric and Gas  
15 Corporation for gas service.

16 Case 22-E-0319 proceeding on motion of  
17 the Commission as to the rates, charges, rules and  
18 regulations of Rochester Gas and Electric Corporation  
19 for electric service.

20 And Case 22-G-0320 proceeding on  
21 motion of the Commission as to the rate, charges,  
22 rules and regulations of Rochester Gas and Electric  
23 Corporation for gas service.

24 Good evening and welcome. My name is  
25 Lindsey Overton, and I'm an Administrative Law Judge

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2 with the New York State Department of Public Service.  
3 With me tonight is Administrative Law Judge Erika  
4 Bergen. And today we -- and together we are  
5 responsible for -- for presiding over the hearings in  
6 these cases and the development of a complete record  
7 in these proceedings.

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

17 NYSEG proposes to increase its annual  
18 electric delivery revenues by approximately 274  
19 million dollars, which is a 31.2 percent increase in  
20 base delivery revenues or 16.8 percent increase in  
21 total revenue. NYSEG requests an increase in an  
22 annual gas delivery revenues of approximately 43  
23 million dollars, which is a 20.7 percent increase in  
24 base delivery revenues or a 9.8 percent increase in  
25 total revenue.

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2 RG&E requests an annual increase in  
3 electric delivery revenues of approximately 93.8  
4 million, which is a 19 percent increase in delivery  
5 revenues or 11.3 percent increase in total revenue.  
6 RG&E also requests an annual increase in gas delivery  
7 revenues of approximately 37 million dollars, which  
8 is a 20.9 percent increase in base delivery revenues  
9 or a 9.7 percent increase in total revenue.

10 We are holding this hearing so that  
11 you can provide your comments on the proposals for  
12 the Public Service Commission's consideration. The  
13 Commission will decide the terms and conditions of  
14 service for NYSEG and RG&E.

15 The Commission consists of seven  
16 members, the Chair, Rory Christian, and Commissioners  
17 Diane Burman, James Alesi, Tracy Edwards, John  
18 Howard, David Valesky and John Maggiore. We're  
19 fortunate today to have Commissioner Maggiore with  
20 us. I will briefly stop and pause and ask whether he  
21 would like to address our participants today.

22 MR. MAGGIORE: Thank you very much. I  
23 just want to thank everybody for participating today,  
24 everybody who's come out virtually. As a  
25 Commissioner, I value hearing directly from people

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2 whose -- whose lives are affected by the matters that  
3 come before us, so I am here to listen tonight.

4 This is the only time you're going to  
5 hear from me because I'm here to -- to -- to hear  
6 from you. So thank you very much for coming out, and  
7 Judge, thank you for letting me say a few words.

8 A.L.J. OVERTON: Thank you,  
9 Commissioner Maggiore. Now, I will take a moment to  
10 explain the process that we are going to follow  
11 today. As I explained before, the purpose of this  
12 hearing is to provide you with an opportunity to tell  
13 the Commission your thoughts on NYSEG and RG&E's rate  
14 proposals.

15 The statements you make today will  
16 become part of the case record. We have a court  
17 reporter on the line who will prepare a transcript of  
18 the hearing which will be included in the official  
19 record of this proceeding so that your comments can  
20 be considered by the members of the Commission.

21 When it is ready, the transcript will  
22 be publicly available for view on the Department of  
23 Public Service website. This hearing is not an  
24 evidentiary hearing with cross examination, or  
25 question and answer session, but really a forum to

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2 hear comments from you. This is not the only  
3 opportunity for comment.

4 If you did not preregister to speak at  
5 today's hearing, but would like your views included  
6 in the record, there are a variety of other ways to  
7 comment as explained in the public notice for today's  
8 event. You can submit comments through the  
9 department's website, by email, by regular mail or by  
10 telephone.

11 All comments will be given equal  
12 consideration regardless of how they're submitted.  
13 Because we are holding a public statement virtually,  
14 we ask -- have asked people to preregister to make a  
15 public statement at today's hearing. If we get  
16 through -- through those who are registered to speak,  
17 we will then open the floor up to those on the line  
18 who did not preregister for today's hearing.

19 We ask that you please summarize any  
20 lengthy written statements orally and summarize --  
21 and submit the full written statement by mail or by  
22 email.

23 We are now ready to begin. If you're  
24 going to speak, you should only use one audio input  
25 and one audio output at your end, otherwise, we may

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2 experience problems with feedback while you are  
3 speaking.

4 I will call the individuals who have  
5 timely preregistered one by one to speak. If someone  
6 is not available when I call them, I will continue on  
7 with the next person, and we'll come back to those  
8 people who are not available at the end. After I  
9 call your name, we will unmute your line and let you  
10 know that you are unmuted.

11 Please remember that if you have put  
12 your own telephone line or computer on mute, you will  
13 also have to unmute your line on your end before you  
14 begin to speak. For telephone participants, when we  
15 call out your name, we ask that you hit Star Three on  
16 your phone so that we can recognize you and unmute  
17 your line.

18 It may take us a moment to locate and  
19 unmute you, so please make sure that you wait until  
20 you hear a beep indicating that your line has been  
21 unmuted before you begin to make your statement.  
22 Just a reminder again, if you've muted your own  
23 telephone, you'll have to unmute that as well.

24 Please speak slowly and clearly so  
25 that the court reporter can accurately capture your

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2 statements for the record. When your line is  
3 unmuted, please state your name, and if you're  
4 speaking on behalf of an organization, identify the  
5 name of the organization which you represent.

6 We will begin first with the  
7 individuals who registered to participate by phone  
8 and then move to those who registered to participate  
9 electronically. If you registered to participate  
10 electronically, but have called in, when I call your  
11 name, please hit Star Three on your telephone so that  
12 we can recognize you and unmute your line.

13 So with that our first speaker is  
14 Warren Lucas. If you could please hit Star Three, we  
15 will unmute your line. It looks like call-in user  
16 two.

17 MR. LUCAS: Hello. I assume you can  
18 hear me, okay.

19 A.L.J. OVERTON: Yes, we can hear you.

20 MR. LUCAS: Yeah, how you doing?  
21 Thanks so much. My name is Warren Lucas. I'm  
22 supervisor of the Town of North Salem. I only have a  
23 couple of minutes to comment. You know, I was one of  
24 the ones that sent a letter in several years ago in  
25 favor of the increase that NYSEG was requesting and



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2 that was really because of all the work they were  
3 doing in my town.

4 And after years of neglect down here,  
5 they put in a bunch of new poles, they put in  
6 reclosure units and a variety of other things, but  
7 you know, line stability is still an issue,  
8 especially for us there's a specific line, should be  
9 port 21, and the -- the reclosure units are really  
10 not -- they're not using them as designed.

11 They can control them from Rochester.  
12 They don't when something goes down. It stays down  
13 for an extended periods of time. There were some  
14 benefits from them, but it's not what we were told.  
15 And, you know, the other thing is -- and I know  
16 you're aware of this, but their billing is an  
17 absolute disaster.

18 It's a travesty and people are getting  
19 no bills for months, incorrect readings, manual  
20 billing for community solar. My list bill was minus  
21 54 dollars. I just got somebody on a billing plan  
22 today that pays 115 a month; his bill was 1,396  
23 dollars. My other town Councilman have bad bills  
24 also. My secretary has bills that are terrible.

25 These things need to get addressed.

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2 And I'm -- I'm just afraid by giving them, you know,  
3 this increase, things will get neglected. I get  
4 bills every day from my constituents asking me what  
5 in God's name is going on, they don't understand  
6 them. And so the new rate of 31 percent, in my  
7 opinion, is excessive.

8 This one I'm assuming it wouldn't take  
9 effect this winter anyway but I'm not sure the exact  
10 date. But this winter is going to be tough already.  
11 NYSEG told us in a letter they just sent out recently  
12 that the variable supply rates, which were 16 cents  
13 less winter per kilowatt hour, that they see them  
14 increasing by about 45 percent. And it's -- it's  
15 going to be very difficult for -- for people to -- to  
16 pay their electric bills.

17 The other comment I just make with the  
18 delivery charge Con -- Con-Ed pays for all home  
19 electrical equipment that they damage, and for food  
20 loss. NYSEG simply says Act of God and ignores it.

21 I personally had -- you know my house,  
22 I lost 5,000 dollars of electrical equipment,  
23 everything from electric blankets, garage door  
24 openers, microwave ovens, everything was fried and,  
25 of course, there was -- there was no -- you know, I

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2 had proved that it was them. I had an electrician  
3 come in after the fact and prove that it was blown  
4 out by -- by something on their lines, which is, you  
5 know, pretty much impossible to do.

6 So, you know, I can appreciate that  
7 they have increased expenses, as we all do, but 31  
8 cents -- 31 percent rather to the recent raise is  
9 really too much. And I think if they're going to get  
10 that much of a raise, they need to do what Con-Ed and  
11 some of the other companies do, which is to cover  
12 things if their system breaks and destroys.

13 So that's the end of my comment, and I  
14 thank you very, very much for listening.

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

17 Could you just please hit Star Three  
18 on your telephone to lower your hand? Thank you.  
19 Our next speaker is Abigail McHugh-Grifa. Abigail,  
20 can you hear us? I see that we have unmuted your  
21 line.

22 It seems that you might be having  
23 technical issues. If you could maybe log out of the  
24 Webex and then log back in, Abigail, that might  
25 help. We had -- we had this at a previous public  
statement

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2 hearing and logging out and logging back in seemed to  
3 resolve the issue. So I'm going to move on to the  
4 next speaker, and we'll come back to Abigail.

5 Wendy Van Buren. Wendy, if you've  
6 called in, if you could please hit Star Three on your  
7 telephone so that we can recognize you and unmute  
8 your line.

9 It looks like Abigail is back. Could  
10 we unmute Abigail's line, please? We'll see if we  
11 resolved the issue.

12 MS. MCHUGH-GRIFA: Can you hear me?

13 A.L.J. OVERTON: We can. Thank you  
14 for calling back in.

15 MS. MCHUGH-GRIFA: Okay. Well, thank  
16 you for figuring out how to make it work. That --  
17 that was easy. Okay. Great. Shall I proceed?

18 A.L.J. OVERTON: Yes, go ahead. Thank  
19 you.

20 MS. MCHUGH-GRIFA: Okay. So good  
21 evening, my name is Abby McHugh-Grifa. I am the  
22 Executive Director of the Climate Solutions  
23 Accelerator of the Genesee Finger Lakes Region, a  
24 member of New York State's Climate Justice Working  
25 Group, an RG&E ratepayer and the mother of two young

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2 children whose future is threatened by climate  
3 change.

4 Wearing all of those hats, I'm here to  
5 advocate for a swift and equitable transition to  
6 clean energy that ends our reliance on natural gas as  
7 quickly as possible. We urgently need the utility  
8 companies to reduce gas sales and greenhouse gas  
9 emissions in compliance with New York State's Climate  
10 Law using the C.L.C.P.A. mandated method of  
11 accounting for methane emissions.

12 To do this successfully, energy  
13 efficiency upgrades and clean heating and cooling  
14 technologies must be affordable and accessible for  
15 everyone. This will require increased rebates for  
16 heat pumps that are provided at the point of sale,  
17 particularly for low to moderate income households.

18 And also pay -- option to pay for  
19 energy improvements over time through our energy  
20 bills as part of a Pay As You Save program or  
21 something similar. In addition, we need the  
22 utilities to ease the process of connecting renewable  
23 energy to the grid. For example, by coordinating  
24 with renewable energy suppliers to provide more  
25 timely, accurate and understandable billing.

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2 And I'll just note real briefly that I  
3 have personally experienced the billing issues that  
4 the previous person mentioned. We have not received  
5 a bill from RG&E in about five months, which makes me  
6 a little nervous because I'm not sure what to expect  
7 when we do finally get something.

8 Ratepayer dollars absolutely shouldn't  
9 be used to provide rebates for gas appliances,  
10 marketing for gas products or anything else that  
11 promotes gas or prolongs our use of gas. This  
12 includes the idea of adding hydrogen to the gas  
13 supply, which shouldn't be allowed because it would  
14 create more problems than it would solve and would  
15 divert funds from weatherization, heat pumps and  
16 other measures that effectively reduce greenhouse gas  
17 emissions and improve energy affordability and public  
18 health.

19 In addition to investing ratepayer  
20 dollars in climate solutions that truly benefit  
21 ratepayers, the utilities should be required to  
22 pursue Inflation Reduction Act funds for the purpose  
23 of greening and modernizing our grid.

24 The climate crisis requires bold  
25 action and significant investment in effective

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2 equitable climate solutions without diluting those  
3 efforts by continuing to invest resources in forms of  
4 energy that contribute to the problem of climate  
5 change. Please hold the utilities accountable for  
6 doing their part to meet the goals of the C.L.C.P.A.

7 Thank you for this opportunity to  
8 participate in this important process.

9 A.L.J. OVERTON: Thank you for your  
10 comment, Abby.

11 I'm going to go back to Wendy Van-  
12 Buren. Wendy, have you joined?

13 Okay. Moving onto Joanne (sic)  
14 Stanlin.

15 MS. STANLIN: Okay. Hi, this is Jo  
16 Stanlin, can you hear me?

17 A.L.J. OVERTON: We can.

18 MS. STANLIN: Excellent. My name is  
19 Jo Stanlin, and I am interested in clean energy  
20 especially and -- so just a little bit about me. I -  
21 - my husband and I are both retired, but we live in  
22 Rush, New York, which, unfortunately for us, we have  
23 RG&E for gas and NYSEG for electric.

24 And so these rate requests are going  
25 to result in the highest amount possible for us

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2 because of the rates for each of those. You know, as  
3 a retired couple, we have limited income and our  
4 investments obviously are a little shaky because of  
5 the -- you know, the economic terms right now.

6 It's hard to imagine where we are  
7 going to come up with the 31 percent increase in our  
8 delivery charges for electricity and 18 percent of  
9 our gas delivery charges. You know, our Social  
10 Security increases 6 percent next year is certainly  
11 not going to cover it. So it's a little scary.

12 These -- it's definitely more than our  
13 6 percent, and I really resent the spending on gas  
14 infrastructure that I'm going to be paying for that  
15 is going to increase shareholder profits. I just  
16 think that that is irresponsible at a time when  
17 there's so many people, including us that are  
18 struggling to make our -- our bi -- our bills.

19 We really -- you know, it'd be helpful  
20 if, you know, we wouldn't be pit lining the pockets  
21 of people who have a lot more money. And I feel like  
22 we need to put this money instead to use on renewable  
23 infrastructure which is the least expensive form of  
24 energy production at this point.

25 That is really what's going to help



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2 New Yorkers the most. And hydrogen, when they're  
3 talking about hydrogen, that is just stuff -- you  
4 know that is just as bad as fossil fuels. They're  
5 just looking for another way, I think to continue to  
6 use fossil fuels in their current infrastructure.

7 It's a dirty fuel, using their  
8 pipelines it'll -- you know, that -- that has the  
9 great potential of leaking methane, which is  
10 obviously very concerning about the greenhouse gases  
11 that they release into the atmosphere.

12 And -- and finally, I think I just  
13 want to, on a personal level, say, you know, I really  
14 worry for the future of my grandchildren and my  
15 children, but, you know, when you're a grandma,  
16 that's what you focus on. But -- although I have  
17 four grandchildren, I worry about all of them about,  
18 you know, the -- you know, the future.

19 Two of my grandchildren were preemies,  
20 one of which was 11 weeks early, so they really have  
21 very compromised breathing, and they are constantly  
22 having upper respiratory infections. One is 15  
23 months old, one is just three years old. They're  
24 constantly sick with upper respiratory infections.

25 And I know because of COVID, they

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2 haven't been out much. Some of that has got to be --  
3 got to be related to the gas they're -- you know the  
4 fumes that they're breathing in in their home, and  
5 that really -- that really saddens me that they have  
6 to put up with that kind of a lifestyle.

7 I think we really need to go to green  
8 energy as fast as possible for -- for everyone, but  
9 especially for my grandchildren. So thank you for  
10 listening.

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

13 Our next speaker is Joshua Doores.  
14 Joshua, if you have called in, please hit Star Three  
15 on your telephone so that we can recognize you and  
16 unmute your line. So seeing no hands raised --

17 MS. KAILAS: No raised hand.

18 A.L.J. OVERTON: Joshua?

19 MS. KAILAS: No raised hand, Your  
20 Honor.

21 A.L.J. OVERTON: Oh, okay. Sorry.  
22 We'll move onto the next speaker who is Christine  
23 Noble. Christine, if you have called in, please hit  
24 Star Three on your telephone. So seeing no hands,  
25 I'm going to move to the next speaker --

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2 MS. KAILAS: No raised hand.

3 A.L.J. OVERTON: -- Wolid Mohamed.

4 Can you please unmute, Mr. Mohamed.

5 MS. KAILAS: Wolid, your line is  
6 unmuted.

7 MR. MOHAMED: Can you hear me?

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

9 MR. MOHAMED: Hi, how you doing? My  
10 name is Wolid Mohamed. I am a residential and former  
11 business owner, a ratepayer, and I want to express my  
12 concern with RG&E asking for a 20 percent rate hike.  
13 I've had history with them when I owned a business  
14 from 2009 until 2016, and my bills would always come  
15 up, you know, extra 200, 300 on top of them.

16 And around 2016 is when I had issues  
17 for five months, and I tried to get a hold of  
18 customer service, and I got a hold of a couple of  
19 people and they told me that my bill was correct.  
20 And I asked them to bring someone down to check my  
21 meter.

22 And eventually, after four days, no  
23 one came, and I went down there, did my own meter  
24 reading, and I come to find out they were estimating  
25 my bills for five months and -- and -- and I was

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2 credited about 900 dollars.

3 And so, you know, the thing is that  
4 RG&E has been doing for years, I -- I know for my --  
5 for instance, I stay in Parcels. My -- my mother  
6 family lived in Henrietta, and she's always arguing  
7 about the bills, keeping the heat down low and -- and  
8 she'll call them and get her credit back.

9 And so they -- they have a -- they  
10 have a history of just complying when someone chases  
11 them and -- and -- and -- and catches them and acts  
12 in some way. And I think a company that's making 95  
13 million dollars a year and -- and with -- with the  
14 laws to help them with their expenses, you know, they  
15 spend equipment, they get 7 to 15 percent of -- of  
16 expense for profits.

17 So there're so many ways for RG&E to  
18 make money that -- for them to ask for a 20 percent  
19 rate hike with inflation occurring and -- and -- and  
20 their history of billing errors, which they were  
21 fined. It just shows that we need a better system  
22 for -- for public utility. I think the money we  
23 spend should work and should just stay in New York  
24 State instead of going to shareholders in -- in  
25 different states.

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2 And -- and I don't blame anyone, I  
3 think in the sense to -- to say it for RG&E is  
4 because they're owned by Avangrid, and I think at the  
5 end of the day, those are the people who make the  
6 last calls, and what we should do is become the  
7 shareholders as the public community shareholders.  
8 And I think that's how we'll save money, and I think  
9 that's how we'll go, you know, help our -- our state  
10 keep the money in our state, help our economy, help  
11 the -- misunfortunate (sic) people.

12 And this -- my -- my thoughts of this  
13 is to say no to the hike rate -- the rate hikes. And  
14 that's all I have to say. Thank you.

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

17 Our next speaker is Alan Blair. Alan,  
18 if you've called in, if you could please hit Star  
19 Three so that we can recognize you and -- and unmute  
20 your line. I see no hands.

21 I'll move to the next speaker,  
22 Cassandra Tilliman.

23 MS. TILLIMAN: Yes, this is Cassandra  
24 Tilliman.

25 A.L.J. OVERTON:it's your turn

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2 for your comment.

3 MS. TILLIMAN: Thank you.

4 A.L.J. OVERTON: Okay.

5 MS. TILLIMAN: My last name is spelled  
6 T-I-L-L-I-M-A-N. I live in Penfield and am a member  
7 of Color Penfield Green and Healthy Yards Monroe  
8 County. Both are local climate action groups. I was  
9 very disappointed when I saw the large RG&E rate  
10 increases. It seems to me to be the very worst time  
11 for this kind of thing to happen.

12 Prices for most everything are high  
13 and inflation is rising, we're expecting colder  
14 winters, especially this one. Many of my friends and  
15 relatives, including me personally, have lost all  
16 confidence in RG&E's billing process. I have spent a  
17 great deal of time on the phone trying to straighten  
18 out my bill, and I still do not trust that it's  
19 correct.

20 I'm especially concerned about low and  
21 mid-income -- middle-income residents, especially  
22 they will have to struggle to meet these increased  
23 costs when they already pay a very high percentage of  
24 their income for energy now.

25 In addition, I strongly oppose the

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2 funding of infrastructure and rebates that would  
3 maintain the use of natural gas, when we should be  
4 concentrating on making renewable energy affordable  
5 for all. Thank you for your time.

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

8 Our next speaker is Dave Nicholson.  
9 Dave, if you have called in, if you could please hit  
10 Star Three on your telephone, we will unmute your  
11 line.

12 Seeing no hands raised, I'll move to  
13 the next speaker, Katie Rygg. Katie --

14 MR. RYGG: Hello?

15 A.L.J. OVERTON:Hi, Katie. Go  
16 ahead.

17 MR. RYGG: Hi. Hi, thank you. My  
18 name is Katie Rygg. I live in Penfield, and I've  
19 been an RG&E customer for a little over six years.  
20 In 2010, I lived in the Bay Area when a gas line  
21 explosion in San Bruno, California, destroyed a  
22 neighborhood and killed eight people.

23 I understand more than most around  
24 here that our existing gas lines must be maintained  
25 for safety, but that is all the money that I want to

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2 see put into our gas infrastructure. I'm a mom of  
3 two little girls and their future depends on the  
4 clean electrification of our society.

5 My family and I have gone all electric  
6 with heat pumps and solar panels. We cut off our gas  
7 supply and have seen significant savings in our  
8 bills. We want this for all New Yorkers, and I ask  
9 you to increase rebates for heat pump technologies,  
10 especially for L.M.I. households that -- households  
11 that even help people use less energy through  
12 weatherization improvements and get creative about  
13 how people will pay them -- pay them off.

14 And I'd love to see more district  
15 geothermal projects like the one in Ithaca. Thank  
16 you for everything you are doing and continue to do  
17 to build out the charging network for E.V.'s, I see  
18 charging stations more frequently these days, keep  
19 them coming.

20 I also have a special interest in  
21 electric school buses, and I always hear that a  
22 school district's first call needs to be to the  
23 utilities and to RG&E's credit. This seems to be a  
24 very positive experience, so thank you for that.

25 However, I've been disgusted that



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2 shareholders' profits have increased, while 37  
3 percent of Rochester residents and almost half of  
4 black and Latino Rochester residents pay 10 percent  
5 up to a quarter of their income on their energy  
6 bills. That is outrageous. And the idea that you  
7 would add 18 percent more on the cost of delivery is  
8 shameful.

9 Finally, I ask that you steer clear  
10 completely of hydrogen and the gas supply. There are  
11 clean ways to generate hydrogen and those  
12 possibilities are exciting. And stripping hydrogen  
13 off methane will lead to methane leaks and prolong  
14 what we know to be the root cause of our climate  
15 crisis, the extraction and burning of fossil fuels.

16 It's for my daughters that I'm here  
17 today asking you to transition or RG&E to transition  
18 to clean electricity as fast as possible without  
19 adding to the energy burden for so many. Thank you.

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

22 Our next speaker is Andrea Fairwell.

23 MS. KAILAS: Andrea, your line is  
24 unmuted.

25 MALE VOICE: She'll be right there.

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2 MS. FAIRWELL: Hello and good evening.

3 My name is Andrea Fairwell. Can you hear me?

4 A.L.J. OVERTON: We can.

5 MS. FAIRWELL: Fantastic. I live in  
6 Rochester, and I work as a Healthcare specialist. I  
7 am a delegate to the Monroe County Workers Benefit  
8 Council, and in that capacity -- and in that capacity  
9 I'm here today to speak on behalf of more than 25,000  
10 low-income workers and their families throughout  
11 Monroe County.

12 I have a few people that are here with  
13 me today, Beverly Usher, I have Barabora McMillion,  
14 Iyhana Avent, Britney Krishna, Disinia Costa, William  
15 Sebastro, Tina Jackson and Katie Ferrall (phonetic  
16 spellings). The Workers Benefit Council expresses  
17 our empathetic -- our emphatic opposition to RG&E and  
18 N.Y.E. -- N.Y.S.E.G., NYSEG's, shameless 580 million  
19 dollar rate hike requests.

20 Furthermore, we demand the Public  
21 Service Commission to do its job and deny this  
22 unaffordable -- unaffordable, unsustainable rate  
23 increase. We are the home health aides, nurses'  
24 aides working in nursing homes, childcare workers,  
25 food service and retail workers.

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2 They started calling us essential  
3 workers during the pandemic -- during the pandemic,  
4 but we don't get paid enough for essentials like home  
5 energy. And so adding another 20 to 22 dollars to  
6 our monthly bills is absolutely out of the question.  
7 For over 12 years we called the Public Service  
8 Commission to follow its own legal mandate to quote,  
9 and I quote, Protect the utility consumer from  
10 potential abuse of monopoly power.

11 And I quote again, "To protect the  
12 rights of New Yorkers while ensuring access to  
13 reliable and low-cost utility services.

14 But all during that time, the Public  
15 Service Commission has broken this mandate choosing  
16 to guarantee a certain rate of a return on investment  
17 for the utility monopoly shareholders that guaranteed  
18 profit of 9 percent last we heard.

19 As a result of the state guaranteeing  
20 those exorbitant profits for energy monopolies  
21 compounding with stagnant wages and fixed incomes,  
22 not keeping up with New York has seen 300,000 utility  
23 customers being shut off every year. 60,000 of those  
24 right here in our region shut off by Avangrid  
25 subsidiary -- subsidiaries, excuse me, RG&E and NYSEG.

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2 But Avangrid's parents company in  
3 Spain, Iberdrola, got 4.4 billion in profits for its  
4 shareholders and pay to its C.E.O. 10 million dollars  
5 year after year. During the pandemic as an emergency  
6 measure, the state has instituted moratorium on  
7 shutoffs which are -- Workers Benefit Council has  
8 already demanding -- has been demanding for 12 years  
9 by petitions, letters and testifyings (sic) at public  
10 hearings.

11 However, at the beginning of 2022, the  
12 state limit the moratorium so shutoffs can begin  
13 again. The COVID-19 pandemic made it that much worse  
14 with -- with thousands losing their jobs, hundreds of  
15 small businesses closing down, so it's not time to  
16 allow shutoffs, it's time to stop shutoffs for ever  
17 for those in need.

18 During the pandemic, according to  
19 RG&E's own 2020 and 2021 financial reports, they  
20 successfully increase their net revenue by 32 percent  
21 and increase their stockholder wealth by over 27  
22 percent. We know -- we know how they did that. Now  
23 13 percent of all utility customers owe more than 2.1  
24 billion dollars, double -- double what was owed at  
25 the same time in 2021.

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2 So Workers Benefit Council is here  
3 today, yet after more than a decade of these hearings  
4 and petitions to continue demanding a permanent year-  
5 round moratorium on all shutoffs for low to moderate-  
6 income ratepayers. This isn't just about financial  
7 debt. Some of us are paying with our lives and our  
8 health.

9 Every winter in Central and Western  
10 New York there's predictable death toll to house  
11 fires and carbon monoxide poisoning of people who  
12 have resorted to unsafe heating methods after being  
13 shut off by RG&E and NYSEG. After other shareholder  
14 and own utilities. Every summer the number of  
15 individuals in the U.S. ending up in emergency rooms  
16 and even dying, heat related deaths kills more than  
17 hurricanes, floods, tornadoes and earthquakes  
18 combined. It's a silent killer. There is no report  
19 on deaths from what heat -- from the heat waves that  
20 the Public Service Commission allows.

21 The same way -- the same way we need -  
22 - we need heating in the winter months, we need air  
23 conditioning in the summer months as well as --  
24 because both are essential to people's health and  
25 wellbeing, not to mention for keeping insulin refri -

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2 - refrigerated -- insulins refrigerated and to keep  
3 breathing equipment from running on, et cetera.

4 This is why we need a permanent year-  
5 round moratorium on all shutoffs for low to moderate  
6 income. On July 28th of this year, the Workers  
7 Benefit Council just submitted a petition to the  
8 Public Service Commission's Office on -- in Albany by  
9 fax containing over 1,300 signatures and a dozen of  
10 endorsement letters from the local faith-ba -- based  
11 groups and not profits who are attempting to address  
12 the needs of the poor in our community.

13 The petitions and demands were in that  
14 a permanent year-round moratorium on utility shutoffs  
15 for New York residents whose income are -- are at or  
16 below 250 percent of the Federal Poverty Level.  
17 Direct RG&E and NYSEG to cancel arrears for the  
18 customers whose incomes are -- are at or below 250  
19 percent of the poverty guidelines.

20 Transition New York State's energy  
21 grid to 100 percent renewable energy by 2030 while  
22 ensuring services both affordable, accessible to even  
23 the lowest income residents. Dozens of our people in  
24 the communities had called the Public Service  
25 Commission Offices to confirm that the petitions have

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2 been received and process.

3 Eventually your staff in the Public  
4 Affairs Office told us that they had received them  
5 from forwarding -- from -- from them and forwarded  
6 them to Secretary Michelle Phillips. Then the  
7 members of our people called her directly and she  
8 eventually indicated that they were and had been  
9 received.

10 We saw what happened next, the state  
11 government claimed debt forgiveness from those in  
12 debt which are -- which is our second demand, but  
13 what they really did is pay off the utilities debts  
14 with 567 million dollars that is coming out of our  
15 taxes, except for the 6 percent.

16 The utilities kicked in, but somehow  
17 they were allowed to actually bill us that 6 percent  
18 through the additional sur -- surcharges to pay off  
19 our debt. The Public Service Commission could make  
20 utilities affordable and environmentally sustainable  
21 in the interest of poor and working people throughout  
22 New York State if it was truly a priority to them.

23 This year, the Public Service  
24 Commission has another chance to live up to its legal  
25 mandate and do what it was created to do, serve the

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2 public. The Monroe County Workers Benefit Council is  
3 here today to demand that the Public Service  
4 Commission deny RG&E's and NYSEG's rate hike request  
5 outright and take the next step and lower the rates.  
6 And add the permanent year-round moratorium on  
7 utility shutoffs for New York residents whose incomes  
8 are at or below 250 percent of the Federal Poverty  
9 Level. Transition New York State's energy grid to  
10 100 percent renewable energy by 2030 while ensuring  
11 service is both affordable, accessible to even the  
12 lowest income residents. Thank you so much.

13 A.L.J. OVERTON: Thank you for your  
14 comment, Andrea.

15 Our next speaker is Christie Krishna  
16 (phonetic spelling), and you mentioned that that  
17 person is with you? Christie?

18 MS. FAIRWELL: Sorry, she was unable  
19 to make it.

20 A.L.J. OVERTON: Okay. Thank you for  
21 letting me know. We will move onto the next speaker,  
22 Taryn Mullen.

23 MS. MULLEN: Hi. Can you hear me?

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

25 MS. MULLEN: Thanks. My name is Taryn



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2 Mullen, and I'm a Rochester resident, RG&E ratepayer  
3 and Climate Solutions Advocate who's deeply concerned  
4 about the impacts of climate change on our  
5 communities both now and in the future. And I  
6 appreciate this opportunity to share a few brief --  
7 brief thoughts about the joint proposal.

8           Quickly and dramatically reducing  
9 greenhouse gas emissions is law here in New York  
10 State mandated in 2019 by the passage of the Climate  
11 Leadership and Community Protection Act. Achieving  
12 targets set in that law, which mandates net zero  
13 emissions economy-wide by 2050 will require massive  
14 investment in our renewable energy generation  
15 capacity in utility grid and residential and  
16 commercial buildings among other sectors.

17           We have to focus on systemic solutions  
18 to climate change that target the root cause of the  
19 problem and large emitters. In addition, we must  
20 recognize the need to prioritize equitable  
21 intersectional climate solutions that allow all  
22 people too quickly and affordably transition to clean  
23 energy regardless of their income level or other  
24 demographic characteristics.

25           According to the City of Rochester's

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2 Climate Action Plan, over half the total emissions in  
3 the city come from onsite combustion of natural gas  
4 used primarily to heat buildings and hot water. We  
5 urgently need to stop burning fossil fuels to heat  
6 our homes and switch to cleaner, more efficient  
7 alternatives.

8 We must do much more to help  
9 struggling New Yorkers in the short term to be able  
10 to make the transition off of fossil fuels through  
11 investment in equitable solutions. This includes  
12 saying no to excessive rate hikes that will worsen  
13 already existing energy burden. New York State has  
14 defined a reasonable energy burden as 6 percent of  
15 one's household expenses.

16 However, according to A.C. Tripoli  
17 (phonetic spelling), 37 percent of Rochester  
18 residents and 44 percent of black and Latino  
19 Rochester residents pay between 10 to 25 percent of  
20 their income for energy. The proposed rate hikes  
21 will make matters worse and impose a disproportionate  
22 burden on our most vulnerable community members.

23 We must also say no to spending close  
24 to a billion dollars plus interest on gas  
25 infrastructure over the next five years for both

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2 utilities. These pipelines will be retired before  
3 they're paid off, leaving ratepayers with the bill  
4 well into the future. We must say no to adding  
5 hydrogen to the gas supply.

6 Doing so will only prolong our  
7 reliance on fossil fuel infrastructure while we  
8 should instead be focusing our efforts on  
9 weatherization, energy efficiency and heat pump  
10 technology. And we must say no to spending ratepayer  
11 dollars on rebates for gas appliances and marketing  
12 for gas products.

13 Instead, we must insist that the  
14 utilities reduce gas sales and greenhouse gas  
15 emissions in compliance with New York's Climate Law  
16 and use the C.L.C.P.A. mandated method for accounting  
17 for methane emissions.

18 We also must insist that they make  
19 renewable heating affordable to everyone by  
20 increasing rebates for heat pump technologies,  
21 particularly for low to moderate income households,  
22 make these rebates point of sale so it's cheaper to  
23 get the technologies that we need.

24 Provide weatherization and clean  
25 heating and cooling improvements with options to pay

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2 them back over time through our energy bills and  
3 install more district ge -- geothermal energy  
4 projects to make renewable heating available to all  
5 utility customers.

6 And we must ease the process of  
7 connecting renewable energy to the grid by  
8 coordinating the utilities with renewable energy  
9 suppliers to provide more timely and understandable  
10 billing.

11 Ultimately, I cannot continue to see  
12 an increase in costs on my own monthly utility bill  
13 when it is not only becoming more unaffordable --  
14 more afford -- unaffordable, but the utilities'  
15 shareholders profit at the expense of the ratepayers  
16 and our planet.

17 I urge RG&E, NYSEG and the Public  
18 Service Commission to be bold and demonstrate the  
19 kind of real leadership that is needed to modernize  
20 our grid, to accommodate renewables and beneficial  
21 electrification and get us off of fossil fuels so  
22 that we can reduce greenhouse gas emissions,  
23 transition to clean energy and achieve the goals of  
24 New York's climate law while also keeping equity  
25 front and center in thinking about how best to make

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2 this transition to an environmentally just and  
3 renewable energy grid. Thank you.

4 A.L.J. OVERTON: Thank you for your  
5 comment, Taryn.

6 Our next speaker is Linda Henschel.  
7 Linda, if you have called in this evening, if you  
8 could please hit Star Three on your telephone, we  
9 will unmute your line.

10 I see Andrea Fairwell has raised her  
11 hand. Could you please unmute her line?

12 MALE VOICE: Linda could not make it,  
13 but there are a number of other people with the --  
14 the council that would like to speak when the time is  
15 appropriate.

16 A.L.J. OVERTON: Okay. So I will move  
17 on to the remaining preregistered speakers, and then  
18 we will come back at the end.

19 Our next speaker is Maureen Prout.  
20 Maureen if you called in, if you could please hit  
21 Star Three on your -- on your telephone, we will  
22 unmute your line. I don't see any raised hand, so I  
23 will move on to the next speaker.

24 Theresa Hotte.

25 MS. HOTTE: Good evening, Commissioner

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2 Maggiore, and Administrative Law Judges Bergen and  
3 Overton. My name is Theresa Hotte, and I'm a staff  
4 attorney at the Public Utility Law Project of New  
5 York or PULP. My pronouns are she/her. PULP is a  
6 40-year-old nonprofit with the mission of educating,  
7 advocating and litigating on behalf of New York  
8 State's low-income utility customers.

9 PULP thanks the Department of Public  
10 Service for the opportunity to testify in relation to  
11 New York State Electric and Gas Corporations and  
12 Rochester Gas and Electric Corporation's electric and  
13 gas rate cases. PULP is an active party in all four  
14 cases. We filed expert testimony on September 26th  
15 and rebuttal testimony this afternoon in these rate  
16 cases.

17 My colleagues and I have made public  
18 statements at each hearing opportunity in order to  
19 advocate for low-income NYSEG and RG&E customers. We  
20 are concerned with the Department of Public Service  
21 staff's recommendation to move NYSEG to a six-year  
22 full-cycle tree trimming plan rather than the  
23 company's proposed five-year plan.

24 While we appreciate staff's emphasis  
25 on cost savings to preserve affordability, we believe

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2 that moving NYSEG to a five-year cycle to bring them  
3 in line with the rest of the state utilities is  
4 incredibly important.

5 Without prudent vegetation management,  
6 NYSEG customers will continue to suffer outages and  
7 lessened reliability, putting their health, safety  
8 and comfort at risk. This is especially true for  
9 low-income customers, seniors and folks living with  
10 various health conditions with which loss of power  
11 can result in dire consequences.

12 We believe that there are other  
13 opportunities for cost-saving measures that we employ  
14 the companies and staff to explore while moving NYSEG  
15 to a five-year full cycle tree trimming plan.  
16 Additionally, the state has an important goal of  
17 keeping low-income customers' energy burdens below 6  
18 percent.

19 According to PULP research, the  
20 average NYSEG customer spends 9.7 percent of their  
21 income on energy, and the average RG&E customer  
22 spends 9.1 percent of their income on energy. Even  
23 before any potential rate increases, customers  
24 already cannot afford their bills.

25 Rate increases like those requested by

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2 the companies will move us even further from these  
3 important energy bearing goals. We continue to see  
4 the reality that economic effects of the COVID-19  
5 pandemic are still heavily felt across the company's  
6 territories.

7 PULP believes now more than ever, it's  
8 imperative to maintain reliable service without  
9 causing further economic stress to low-income  
10 customers. We respectfully ask the Public Service  
11 Commission to thoroughly scrutinize the company's  
12 request in order to ensure that rates are just,  
13 reasonable or affordable and fair. Thank you for  
14 your time.

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

17 Our next speaker is Charlie Caradonna.  
18 Sangeetha, could you please unmute  
19 Charlie's line?

20 MR. CARADONNA: Okay. Unmute --  
21 unmute -- file -- and if you -- hang on -- hang on,  
22 unmute.

23 A.L.J. OVERTON: You're -- you're  
24 unmuted, Charlie --

25 MR. CARADONNA: Okay.



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2 A.L.J. OVERTON: -- I can hear you.

3 MR. CARADONNA: Okay. Thank you.

4 A.L.J. OVERTON: You're welcome.

5 MR. CARADONNA: All right. Yeah, I  
6 was looking for some information from Avangrid -- and  
7 just a second, I want to pull that up. Okay. Keep  
8 in mind there's a lot of people out here that are --  
9 that are on fixed incomes, but their gross profit for  
10 the quarter year ending January -- June 30th, 2022,  
11 this -- this was past June was 11.2 percent or 1.5 --  
12 354 billion dollars.

13 And last -- and a year from last June  
14 30th, they increased -- there was an increase of  
15 profit of 2.84 percent, 5. -- that's 5.324 billion  
16 dollars. The gross profit for 2020 -- all 2021 was  
17 5.255 billion dollars, a 6.35 increase. That was in  
18 2020 -- 2021 from 2020. From 2019 to 2020, it was  
19 4.94, a 2.36 percent in -- percent increase.

20 And Avan -- Avangrid's annual gross  
21 profit for -- from 2018 to 2019 was 4.827 billion, a  
22 .06 percent increase. Now, with all these -- with  
23 all these rising prices -- prices and fix -- and  
24 rates and fees and whatever, what are we going to do  
25 on fixed income where we're only getting callers once

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2 a year.

3 But how many times in a year have they  
4 raised their fees? You know that that is my -- that  
5 that is my question. You know, I mean is it  
6 necessary, well, all this profit, why -- why are we  
7 increasing fees? We should be looking into -- I  
8 agree though, we should be looking into renewable  
9 energy and getting off the fossil fuel.

10 But, you know, we -- we have to do  
11 this -- we have to do this the most logical way, and  
12 I -- I propose where they have a bunch of programs  
13 for everybody -- for everybody, why don't we have a  
14 special budget program for, like, seniors, people on  
15 fixed incomes that -- that have a hard time because  
16 they cannot -- they can't adjust.

17 It -- they can only adjust once a  
18 year, but they can -- but the -- but the companies  
19 can only raise their prices like so much so many  
20 times by -- by law, you know. But I think we just  
21 make it -- make it consistent -- you know, and make  
22 it consistent so people won't -- won't go broke,  
23 because actually, you know what, our real income is  
24 down, and it's getting lower every year, those on  
25 fixed income.

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2 Real income is your gross and net  
3 income minus all your bills and everything like that.  
4 How can we keep up? How can they keep up? Okay.  
5 That's all I have to say. Thank you.

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

8 So we've gone through the list of  
9 preregistered speakers. I'm going to run through it  
10 again and see if anyone has joined who we called on  
11 previously.

12 Wendy Van-Buren? Wendy, if you've  
13 called in, if you could hit Star Three on your  
14 telephone, we will unmute your line.

15 Okay. I don't see any hand raised, so  
16 moving to the next speaker, Joshua Doores, I see he  
17 is on the line, so if we could unmute his line,  
18 please?

19 MS. KAILAS: Joshua, your line is  
20 unmuted.

21 MR. DOORES: Hello, yeah, can you guys  
22 hear me?

23 A.L.J. OVERTON: We can.

24 MR. DOORES: Okay, great. All right.  
25 So my name is Joshua Doores. I'm a resident of

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2 Honeoye, Rich -- Town of Richmond. I've lived in  
3 Rochester many years. I've been in Rochester since  
4 going to college at RAT in 2008. And, you know,  
5 honestly, this is not something that I follow a whole  
6 bunch, but I am -- you know, concerned about the  
7 environment.

8 I -- I tried to get news when it comes  
9 about the environment, and I actually was -- I'm --  
10 I'm a part of where I get news from Climate Solutions  
11 Accelerator, and I saw a recent email where they're  
12 talking about this hearing and the price rates that  
13 RG&E and NYSEG were -- were looking to -- to get, and  
14 it just prompted me to -- to -- to join in on this  
15 call.

16 You know, I have never been prompted  
17 to do anything like this before, and I consider  
18 myself relatively moderate, you know, I think that  
19 we're going to need to take -- we needed to be --  
20 obviously need to take steps to move forward in terms  
21 of trying to live holistically with our environment  
22 and trying to get off of fossil fuels, which are both  
23 not, you know -- they're not going to be there  
24 forever, and they're also damaging to our  
25 environment.

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2 But, you know -- and we -- and we  
3 trust our utilities to do what's best for -- with  
4 that, but the reality as I see it is that these --  
5 these rate hikes are just -- they're just completely,  
6 you know, not -- they're not in line with what  
7 consumers can afford, kind of like what was in line  
8 with the last speaker, and these just are not in line  
9 with what people can afford today.

10 And I think the -- the -- these --  
11 these utilities need -- need to remember that, you  
12 know, their -- their job is to -- to serve the  
13 consumer, you know, I mean, that's a tried-and-true  
14 rule of business ultimately is, you know, a business  
15 that we now are the ones that provide the best  
16 product and the ones that serve the consumer.

17 And, you know, I did a quick  
18 calculation based on what I'm paying right now to  
19 NYSEG for gas and electric, and it's right above 6  
20 percent of my salary. I'm an -- I'm an electrical  
21 engineer, I have a decent job. You know, there's  
22 lots of people that are doing better than me, and  
23 there's lots of people that aren't doing as well as I  
24 am. And I'm here in a situation where if -- if rates  
25 -- rates were to go up by 10, 15, 18 percent, 31

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2 percent, in the case of NYSEG Electric, you know,  
3 that is going to -- that is going to affect the  
4 budget in a big way.

5 And everything -- you know, things  
6 have been going up. We know about inflation and  
7 everything, and obviously, companies had to deal with  
8 that too, but it's just -- it's not right to push all  
9 of your excess expenses onto the consumer. You can't  
10 just push everything. Your business, you're supposed  
11 to be able to take on some of this yourself.

12 And so for me, it's just like you got  
13 to do right by your consumer, you got to do right by  
14 your customer. If you can't do right by the  
15 customer, like, you know how -- you know how that's  
16 going to end up. Ult -- ultimately there will be --  
17 the -- the consumers are not going to put up with it,  
18 and we're going to find other ways and you're going  
19 to -- the utilities are going to lose out in the end,  
20 so you got to do right by your consumer. That's all  
21 I have to say.

22 A.L.J. OVERTON: Thank you for your  
23 comment, Joshua.

24 Our next speaker is Christine Noble.  
25 Christine, if you have called in, please hit Star

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2 Three on your telephone, and we will unmute your  
3 line.

4 Okay. I don't see any hands raised,  
5 so we'll move to the next speaker, Alan Blair.

6 Again, Alan if you have called in, please hit Star  
7 Three on your telephone, and we will unmute your  
8 line.

9 MS. KAILAS: No raised hand, Your  
10 Honor.

11 A.L.J. OVERTON: Okay. We will move  
12 to Gay Nicholson (ph). Gay, if you have called in,  
13 if you could please hit Star Three, we will unmute  
14 your line.

15 MS. KAILAS: No raised hand, Your  
16 Honor.

17 A.L.J. OVERTON: Thank you. Linda  
18 Henschel. If you can please unmute Andrea Fairwell's  
19 line, I believe Linda Henschel is with the group.

20 MS. KAILAS: Your line has been  
21 unmuted, Andrea.

22 MS. FAIRWELL: Hi, I just want to let  
23 you know that both Linda and Maury (ph) were not able  
24 to make it tonight.

25 A.L.J. OVERTON: Okay. Thank you for

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2 letting me know. So now that we have gone through  
3 the individuals who preregistered to speak today, we  
4 will open up the hearing to anyone in attendance who  
5 would like to speak but did not pre-register to do  
6 so.

7 If you would like to make a statement,  
8 please click the raise hand icon in the bottom-right  
9 corner of your screen, or if you have called in,  
10 press Star Three on your telephone, either option  
11 will enable us to recognize you and unmute you so  
12 that you can make your statement.

13 I see Andrea Fairwell's hand is raised  
14 again, if you can please unmute her line?

15 MS. KAILAS: Andrea, your line is  
16 unmuted.

17 MS. FERRALL: Thank you. My name is  
18 Katie Farrell, it's spelled F-E-R-R-A-L-L. Good  
19 afternoon. I live in -- I guess what would be --  
20 what would be considered Brighton, and I am an  
21 American Sign Language interpreter. I'm here today  
22 with the Monroe County Workers Benefit Council. And  
23 -- sorry, pardon? Oh, I thought they were saying  
24 something.

25 Okay. As has already been said, the



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2 W.B.C. is completely against any rate hike whatsoever  
3 as the bills have been growing increasingly  
4 unaffordable for a growing majority of ratepayers for  
5 many years now, but of course this has not stopped  
6 RG&E, NYSEG nor their parent companies from making  
7 record profits all along, even during the pandemic  
8 while the numbers of households unable to afford  
9 their utility bill doubled. We know that this is due  
10 to the Public Service Commission's prioritizing the  
11 company shareholder's wealth over the urgent survival  
12 needs of the low income ratepayers who are victimized  
13 by rate hikes and face shutoffs every year.

14 Another example of the P.S.C.s flawed  
15 priorities can be seen in the recent so-called debt  
16 forgiveness program admittedly 567 million dollars  
17 towards forgiving utility debt sounds good at first;  
18 however, let us pause for a moment and look at the  
19 whole context, shall we?

20 The P.S.C. guarantees the RG&E's  
21 parent company a 9 percent rate of return on  
22 investments and enough, other than for a one-year  
23 during -- during the pandemic, places no limitations  
24 on how many low-income customers they can shut off  
25 who fall behind on their bills.

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2 Then each year when it becomes clear  
3 that the ratepayers are not going to be able to pay  
4 back what they've been overcharged, instead of  
5 pulling the reigns on the companies forcing them to  
6 lower their rate or at least lower their government-  
7 guaranteed profits, they take our tax dollars every  
8 year and pay off the utility what they are demanding.  
9 That is the Home Energy Assistance Program or HEAP.

10 Then this year with the problem of  
11 unaffordable utility rates at an all-time high due to  
12 the economic fallout from the pandemic matched by  
13 unprecedented price gouging on the wholesale energy  
14 market by energy traders, what does the state  
15 government do? They go to the utilities and say,  
16 hey, average working people out here have been  
17 tightening their belts for years.

18 If you want to continue to do business  
19 and make your profits here in the New York State,  
20 you're going to have to show some good faith and  
21 lower your rates and profits. Absolutely not. They  
22 did not say that. Instead, they went to the  
23 legislator, it got them to cough up 250 million  
24 dollars in the next year's budget throwing a 100  
25 million dollars of E.R.A.P. money for a federal

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2 pandemic relief aid and then let the utilities added  
3 an additional surcharge of 181 million dollars to our  
4 bills to generate more money for the program.

5 The utilities themselves are only  
6 kicking in 36 million statewide, so that means each  
7 of the five or so large utilities are only chipping  
8 in 7 million or so. That's not even chump change for  
9 them. So what this debt forgiveness program really  
10 amounts to is nothing more than a bail out for the  
11 utilities.

12 They cannot force us to pay out money  
13 we did not have in our limited income, so instead  
14 they dipped into the public ... and paid off the  
15 utilities to make good on their government-guaranteed  
16 profits. Does the government's office and P.S.C.  
17 have such low opinion of us that they think we're too  
18 dumb to see what they are doing?

19 You cannot fool us into believing you  
20 are suddenly accountable to the poor and working  
21 people who make up the majority of the residents of  
22 the State of New York with this sloppy attempt at  
23 sleight of hand. On the contrary, you have just  
24 allowed a multinational energy holding company to  
25 strong-arm you out of over half a billion dollars

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2 that was desperately needed for all sorts of critical  
3 projects from education to public health, to  
4 combating climate change, to public works and jobs  
5 and so much more.

6 The W.B.C. is calling on the P.S.C. to  
7 make it good on its legal mandate to, quote, Protect  
8 the utility consumers from their potential abuse of  
9 monopoly power and to quote, protect the rights of  
10 New Yorkers while ensuring access to reliable and low  
11 cost utility services. The W.B.C. demands the P.S.C.  
12 to begin to comply with our three demands:

13 Firstly, deny RG&E and NYSEG's rate  
14 hike request outright and take the next steps and  
15 lower the rates. Secondly, enact a permanent year-  
16 round moratorium on utility shutoffs of New York  
17 residents whose income are at or below 250 percent of  
18 the Federal Poverty Line.

19 And thirdly, transition New York  
20 State's energy grid to a 100 percent renewable energy  
21 by 2030 while ensuring service is both affordable and  
22 accessible to even the lowest income residents ...  
23 We do -- we do have more people in the room, so if  
24 you'd like us all just to go back to back, that is  
25 possible.

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2 A.L.J. OVERTON: Thank you, Katie.

3 That works for me. I just ask that everybody  
4 announce their name and spell it for the court  
5 reporter before they begin their comments, please.

6 MS. COSTA: Hello. Can you hear me,  
7 okay?

8 A.L.J. OVERTON: We can.

9 MS. COSTA: Perfect. Hi, good  
10 evening. My name is Jessenia Costa. That is J-E-S-  
11 S-E-N-I-A C-O-S-T-A. I live in Rochester, for the  
12 past 13 years. I am a home health aide and a C.N.A.  
13 I have two individuals at home, personally, that are  
14 ill. I have an elderly mother that uses a CDPAP  
15 (sic) machine. Every night without it, she'd be dead.

16 I have a son that just had surgery  
17 that also is an asthmatic. I cannot afford any more  
18 rate hikes on my RG&E bill. RG&E went this last  
19 summer, taking all -- all on our neighborhood,  
20 putting pipes, putting meter in the front of our  
21 house. What purpose did that serve? And then hit  
22 everybody with a 1,500 dollar bill.

23 That is more 50 percent of my bill.  
24 Not 10, not 20 percent, this is more than 50 percent  
25 of my budget. I cannot say to my children, oh, I'm

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2 not going to pay rent for this month because I have  
3 to pay RG&E. Why, because RG&E is more important  
4 than the rent. I'm either going to be homeless or  
5 die of freezing temperatures now that winter is  
6 coming.

7 And winter is coming hard this winter.  
8 It's already below zero out here in some places. I  
9 can't afford any of this. I don't think anybody can.  
10 Individuals that are just living off of Social  
11 Security -- Social Security is less than 1,000  
12 dollars a month. What are we supposed to do when we  
13 pay like 600 dollars a rent, and get a 500 dollar  
14 RG&E bill?

15 We can't do that. We got to pay for  
16 food, in some cases, we're going to pantry. And my  
17 personal experience, I will tell you, I go to panty  
18 to get food. I have to go to different places to  
19 reach out to my community to help and assist month to  
20 month already. I need to be thinking about more  
21 money when I'm about to dish out to these  
22 billionaires that are getting tax ... every year.

23 It is ridiculous. Like, it's so  
24 ridiculous. It's repulsive to me. It makes me want  
25 to vomit. So I'd be under the -- I'll keep this a

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2 little bit short, and I am part of the W.B.C, and  
3 this is why I endorse the Monroe County Workers  
4 Benefit Council.

5 I would like to cancel this rate hike  
6 in entirety, like indefinitely do not try to charge  
7 anybody else not 1 percent more on their RG&E bill,  
8 indefinitely, and stop a year-round moratorium on  
9 shutoff, nobody can stress.

10 During these times that we just went  
11 through a pandemic, we're still living through a  
12 pandemic. I don't know if anybody understand that  
13 this is still an ongoing situation for the community,  
14 for this country, but we need to stop and stop  
15 immediately. And we need transition to a 100 percent  
16 renewable energy grid by 2030 while keeping rates  
17 affordable for even the lowest income ratepayer.  
18 Thank you.

19 A.L.J. OVERTON: Thank you for your  
20 comment. Is there anybody else in the group who  
21 would like to speak?

22 MS. COSTA: We have another speaker.

23 A.L.J. OVERTON: Yes.

24 MR. ORTIZ: Good afternoon. My name  
25 is Omar Ortiz. I live in --

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2 MS. COSTA: Spell it.

3 MR. ORTIZ: O-R -- O-M-A-R O-R-T-I-Z.

4 MS. COSTA: He's a little nervous.

5 This is the youth of our community speaking up on the  
6 behalf of the entire youth community of Rochester,  
7 New York.

8 MR. ORTIZ: What I wanted to speak  
9 about is how parents are stressing and the adults in  
10 my life are stressing about RG&E bills wondering when  
11 their light is going to turn off if they don't pay it  
12 early or late. So I have -- I have a grandma at  
13 home, who is disabled and she needs heat in her house  
14 in the -- in her house, because if she doesn't have  
15 heat, how is she going to survive?

16 MALE VOICE: Right.

17 MR. ORTIZ: It's getting cold out  
18 here, as my mother said, and I just want to know when  
19 --

20 MS. COSTA: What --

21 MR. ORTIZ: I thought --

22 MS. COSTA: You're not putting --

23 MALE VOICE: Go, Omar, go.

24 MR. ORTIZ: Thank you. Now I'm 100  
25 percent.



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

3 MR. ORTIZ: So -- so yeah, and again  
4 this -- so my brother just got out of the hospital  
5 for back surgery because he got in a car crash on my  
6 birthday last year. So he needs -- he needs to be  
7 comfortable. He needs light, obviously. So us  
8 paying for all these things that we need and should  
9 be provided without paying, I don't understand why we  
10 don't have it.

11 And like some days when I go in  
12 school, I see kids with -- not all brand clothing,  
13 but like not the clothing that they need for the  
14 winter, not coats, nice clothing to keep them warm.  
15 And that's because their parents need to pay this  
16 extra money every time they have a bill each month.

17 Their parents need the money to  
18 provide food, clothing, footwear, because, you know,  
19 in the winter, the snow gets really high, so you need  
20 good shoes for the winter, yeah. And that is why I  
21 endorse the demands of the Monroe County Workers  
22 Benefit Council.

23 A.L.J. OVERTON: Thank you for your  
24 comment, Omar. Is there anybody else at the group  
25 who would like to speak at this point?

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2 MS. MCMILLON: Good evening. My name  
3 is Barbara McMillon. I live in Rochester. I am -- I  
4 am retired from Monroe County.

5 MALE VOICE: Spell it. Spell.

6 MS. MCMILLON: My name is Barbara, B-  
7 A-R-B-A-R-A M-C-M-I-L-L-O-N. And I'm retired from  
8 Monroe County. I used to be Administrative  
9 Assistant. And I -- I see that -- you know, not only  
10 is this going to affect low-income people, middle  
11 class are suffering just as well. Who can afford --  
12 who gets a 10 percent, 9 percent increase in their  
13 pay? Nobody that I know of.

14 I was lucky if I got while I was  
15 working 2 percent. And this is just nonsense. They  
16 are talking about infrastructure -- fixing the  
17 infrastructure. I've owned my home since June of  
18 1981. I remember just one time that I've called RG&E  
19 to come and cut tree limbs down from wires, and it  
20 took numerous calls for them to even come out and do  
21 that.

22 Where -- where are they fixing these -  
23 - these areas? I doubt if it's going to be in our  
24 low-income neighborhoods. And, you know, we're  
25 discriminated on every side when it comes to getting

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2 services for inner city neighborhoods. Nobody can  
3 afford this type of increase. Or if you don't go for  
4 these new meters that they want to put outside your  
5 home, to be charged an extra 20 dollars or more.  
6 That will probably go up as well.

7 I am just -- just frustrated, that as  
8 you -- as I sit in retirement and see my income is  
9 going to be even less from all these increases  
10 because it's going to be followed probably by other  
11 utilities, if this is granted. This is not going to  
12 be the only one. And they're -- they're just greedy.

13 I also endorse, I -- I hear what the  
14 Monroe County Workers Benefit Council -- and I  
15 endorse the demands of the Workers Benefit Council.  
16 Cancel this rate hike entirely. Every year we're at  
17 -- at -- at this level trying to prevent these rate  
18 hikes. We shouldn't have to keep coming back to the  
19 drawing board.

20 Our income is not increasing like  
21 this. Install a year-round moratorium on shutoffs  
22 and transition to 100 percent renewable energy grid  
23 by 2030, while keeping rates affordable for even the  
24 lowest income ratepayers. Thank you.

25 A.L.J. OVERTON: Thank you for your

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2 comment, Barbara. Is there anybody else from the  
3 group who would like to speak right now?

4 MS. AVENT: Yes. Hi, my name is  
5 Iyhana Avent. It's spelled I-Y-H-A-N-A, and my last  
6 name Avent, A-V-E-N-T. So good afternoon, my name is  
7 Iyhana Avent. I live in Rochester, New York, Monroe  
8 County. I'm a student and a healthcare worker, and  
9 I'm here with the Monroe County Workers Benefit  
10 Council.

11 My whole life I've seen people in this  
12 community suffer and they continue to be resilient.  
13 This community does not deserve rate hikes. 50  
14 percent of people's incomes are being used for RG&E.  
15 This community cannot afford these rate hikes. These  
16 rate hikes are a cash grab. I'm worried about my  
17 grandmother being retired and trying to keep up with  
18 rising energy bills.

19 I'm worried about my future children  
20 and the environment that I'll have to raise them in.  
21 I'm worried -- I'm worried for people during our hard  
22 winter, since RG&E does shutoffs. Also, RG&E has a  
23 virtual monopoly over this -- over the Rochester  
24 area. So people in this community really don't have  
25 a choice but to protest.

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2 This community does not deserve  
3 constant billing er -- errors for years, to sit and  
4 credit bills for months without sending out notices  
5 is predatory. It's time for the company in this area  
6 to do right by the community that keeps them very  
7 wealthy.

8 And I am here with the Monroe County  
9 Workers Benefit Council, and that is why I endorse  
10 the demands of the Monroe County Workers Benefit  
11 Council. Cancel these rates entirely, and sought a  
12 year-round moratorium of -- on shutoffs and  
13 transition to a 100 percent renewable energy grid by  
14 two -- by 2030, while keeping rates affordable for  
15 even the lowest income ratepayers.

16 We do not want to be like Texas, where  
17 we're trying to keep up and trying to now put in  
18 renewable energy resources. We want to be on the  
19 ball, on top of it, for this community and its  
20 consumers. Thank you.

21 A.L.J. OVERTON: Thank you for your  
22 comment, Iyhana. Is there anybody else from the  
23 group who would like to speak?

24 MALE VOICE: Yes, we have another one.  
25 They're approaching.

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2 MS. COTTON: Yeah, excuse me. My name  
3 is Elaine E-L-A-I-N-E, last name is Cotton C-O-T-T-O-  
4 N. I'm going to try to keep my thoughts straight. I  
5 am single, I am disabled, so be patient with me, but  
6 I'll try to go quickly. Currently, I am recovering  
7 from a heart attack.

8 But I -- I felt that it was extremely  
9 important for me to be here, for you to hear my voice  
10 about the RG&E rate hike. During the time when RG&E  
11 did the first rate hike, I remember it vividly  
12 because the bill that I received that month was more  
13 than 60 percent of my income. And I had to make a  
14 choice to pay -- take money from my food budget to  
15 pay RG&E bill or -- or basically feed my kids. I got  
16 it done, but I ended up taking -- reducing the amount  
17 of food I bought just to pay RG&E bill, and that's  
18 not a choice that I should have had to make.

19 And I know that, I am not the only one  
20 who has to make that choice from month to month,  
21 okay. Already, and there is now another rate hike  
22 that -- and our children deserve better. These  
23 people, they already -- they don't need, food stamps.  
24 They don't need to look for a second and third job.  
25 They already have lots of money, okay.

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2 It's -- it's the people, who is single  
3 parents and -- and even parents work with two jobs  
4 having to pay daycare and buy food and buy clothes  
5 and all -- all those things, it's them that's  
6 suffering. We're suffering every day, and I don't  
7 need -- I got -- I can't even begin to tell you all  
8 the medical bills that -- I mean, not medical bills,  
9 but medical problems that I'm dealing with.

10 I have a heart mon -- monitor to  
11 monitor my heart that must stay on, and I need RG&E  
12 in order to do that, okay. I -- I'm so tied up and  
13 wound up right -- right now just trying to explain  
14 how difficult my life is, and how hard and -- and so  
15 much more problems that RG&E is giving me, it's  
16 making it worse, okay.

17 The -- the heart attack that I had was  
18 partially about stress, and this rate hike is  
19 stressing me even more, okay. So I can't even begin  
20 to -- to just express all the -- the issues and all  
21 the problems when this is not necessary. They  
22 already just did one rate hike. They don't need to  
23 do this one. It's -- it's not necessary.

24 And I'm asking you to help me, help  
25 people like me. And you're the only one who can help

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2 me do this. That's why I'm here. I -- I'd rather be  
3 in bed, that's where I'd rather be right now. But  
4 I'm here talking to you, begging you to help the  
5 community here.

6 Help the sick, help the dying. We  
7 can't help ourselves. Could you please just -- just  
8 do something, okay. I mean, that's why I'm in  
9 partner with -- with the Benefit Council. I -- I'm  
10 100 percent behind them. I'm glad that somebody is  
11 trying to help people like me, because it's too many  
12 people out there that's not trying to help people  
13 like me.

14 In many ways they have saved my life.  
15 And I'm asking you to help save people like me, help  
16 save our lives, because that's -- when you stop all  
17 of these rate hikes, that's what you're doing, you're  
18 helping save my life by not stressing me so bad. I  
19 hope -- I just hope you do something, please --  
20 please. Thank you.

21 A.L.J. OVERTON: Thank you for your  
22 comment. Is there anybody else from the group who  
23 would like to speak now?

24 MS. AVENT: That is all.

25 A.L.J. OVERTON: Okay. Thank you. I



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2 want to open up the floor to anybody else on the line  
3 who would like to make a statement. If you would  
4 like to do so, please click the raise hand icon in  
5 the bottom right corner of your screen, or if you  
6 have called in, press Star Three on your telephone.

7 I see Charlie Caradonna's hand is  
8 raised?

9 MR. CARADONNA: Yup.

10 A.L.J. OVERTON: Would you -- would  
11 you like to make another statement?

12 MR. CARADONNA: Yeah.

13 A.L.J. OVERTON: Okay. Sure. Go  
14 ahead.

15 MR. CARADONNA: Okay. Thank you. I  
16 just want to -- I wanted to say that, I didn't mean a  
17 single -- seniors were being on a fixed income, I  
18 meant everybody that's on a fixed income, like from  
19 welfare recip -- recipients or people that are  
20 working up to three jobs a day to make ends meet.  
21 And, you know, I mean, how -- how -- how do we -- how  
22 do we make up for this? You know, I'm -- I'm sitting  
23 here and on a fixed income and I'm deciding what  
24 bills to pay and which bills to hold off on. You  
25 know, and -- yeah, it -- it ain't easy, obviously.

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2 But, you know, the -- the thing is,  
3 is that it's happening -- it's happening everywhere  
4 and -- and sometimes it is so much like ... where one  
5 person is -- one company is raising rates and the  
6 others have to -- have to chime in. You know, but I  
7 -- I think it's -- it's time -- it's time to stop.

8 I think I -- I -- I believe that, you  
9 know what -- oh, we have to pay expenses too just  
10 like they do. But you know what, why did -- they get  
11 to pass their expenses on to us. They -- they get to  
12 pass their tax -- the tax revenue -- their tax --  
13 their taxes on to us. I don't know how much they're  
14 paying in taxes. I've been trying to look up how  
15 many times they passed a rate hike this year. And,  
16 you know, and we only get, you know, fixed incomes,  
17 like I said, we only get one rate hike, a caller, an  
18 annual caller, you know -- you know, I think they --  
19 they all -- there -- there should be other avenues,  
20 but you know, I think it -- it's time to stop passing  
21 on the expenses. It's like passing the buck. That's  
22 all they're doing is passing the buck onto the people  
23 that have no buck to pass on to, okay. Thank you  
24 very much.

25 A.L.J. OVERTON: Thank you again,

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2 Charlie.

3 Is there anybody else on the line who  
4 would like to make a comment at this time? I see  
5 another hand raised.

6 Sangeetha, if you could please unmute  
7 that line.

8 MS. SANGEETHA: That is unmuted.

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

10 MS. REAGAN: Is this for Lisa Reagan?

11 A.L.J. OVERTON: I'm sorry, what --  
12 what was that?

13 MS. REAGAN: Is -- are -- did you  
14 unmute Lisa Reagan to give a comment?

15 A.L.J. OVERTON: Yes.

16 MS. REAGAN: Okay. So I object to the  
17 extent of the rate increase requested. It is  
18 understandable that with the increase of cost in some  
19 areas, a rate increase might be necessary, but it  
20 does not appear to me that the utility has been  
21 utilizing the previous increases to fulfill its  
22 obligations to the ratepayers.

23 I invested and did the right thing for  
24 our state's renewable energy goals by putting solar  
25 panels on my house. The monthly charge, however, has

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2 increased regularly even though I am feeding  
3 electricity back into the grid.

4 It appears to me that RG&E is  
5 increasing this delivery charge as a way of  
6 discouraging people from putting solar energy --  
7 solar panels on their houses and helping the state  
8 with its renewable energy goals because this  
9 discourages New York residents from investing in that  
10 type of renewable energy.

11 Worse, RG&E is required under my  
12 agreement with RG&E, where I put the solar panels and  
13 to read the external meters monthly and to provide an  
14 accurate -- including of my generation of kilowatt  
15 generation and use. So for the past year, I've had  
16 to call and try to get them to read the meters, and  
17 I've still not succeeded in getting them to do that  
18 on a regular basis.

19 For this reason, the annual  
20 reconciliation that they are supposed to use to  
21 determine how much I provided to RG&E and how much  
22 they give me credit for is not that correct. This  
23 makes planning for utility use and energy savings  
24 very difficult.

25 So they already increased delivery

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2 charges, have not caused RG&E to uphold its  
3 obligations while my significant investment helps its  
4 electricity generation burden. I'm trying to work  
5 with NYSERDA to further improve the utility use in my  
6 house to help the state with its energy goals.

7 But this type of -- it -- it feels --  
8 feels like, ambushing is not -- is not helping. So  
9 if previously granted increases in rates have not  
10 caused RG&E to be able to keep up with obligations, I  
11 don't see how they can justify that more money will  
12 suddenly cause them to keep the trees trimmed and do  
13 the maintenance that they're already supposed to have  
14 built into their operating model. Thank you.

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

17 Is there anybody else on the line who  
18 would like to make a comment at this time? You can  
19 either click the raise hand icon in the bottom right  
20 hand of the screen, or press Star Three on your  
21 telephone if you have called in today.

22 MS. SANGEETHA: No raised hand, Your  
23 Honor.

24 A.L.J. OVERTON: Thank you, Sangeetha.  
25 Since there is nobody else on the line

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2 who would like to make a statement at this time,  
3 we're going to conclude the hearing. I want to thank  
4 everyone for their comments today.

5 I would like to remind anyone  
6 listening that you may also submit comments by the  
7 other means described earlier in the hearing and in  
8 the August 19th notice of public statement hearing.  
9 Judge Bergen and I thank everyone for their interest  
10 here today.

11 We also thank Commissioner Maggiore  
12 for participating, our Consumer Services Office for  
13 administering the session, and our court reporter.  
14 The public statement hearing is now concluded, and we  
15 are off the record.

16 (The hearing concluded at 6:32 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 70, 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 25th day of October, 2022.

11

12 ANTHONY MCCLAIN, Reporter

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