

1 10/18/2023 - Central Hudson - 23-E-0418/23-G-0419

2 STATE OF NEW YORK

3 PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

4 CASE 23-E-0418 - Proceeding on motion of the
5 Commission as to the Rates, Charges, Rules and
6 Regulations of Central Hudson Gas and Electric
7 Corporation for electric service.

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9 CASE 23-G-0419 - Proceeding on motion of the
10 Commission as to the Rates, Charges, Rules and
11 Regulations of Central Hudson Gas and Electric
12 Corporation for gas service.

13
14 PUBLIC STATEMENT HEARING

15 DATE: October 18, 2023 at 1:06 p.m.

16 LOCATION: Town of Poughkeepsie
17 One Overocker Road
18 Poughkeepsie, New York 12603

19 BEFORE: ALJ ASHLEY MORENO
20 ALJ JAMES COSTELLO
21 CHAIR RORY CHRISTIAN
22 COMMISSIONER DAVID VALESKY

23
24
25 Reported by Danielle Christian

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2 (The hearing commenced at 1:06 p.m.)

3 THE REPORTER: On the record.

4 A.L.J. MORENO: I call cases 23-E-0418

5 and 23-G-0419, proceedings on motions of the

6 Commission as to the rates, charges, rules and

7 regulations of Central Hudson Gas & Electric

8 Corporation for Electric and Gas Service.

9 FROM THE AUDIENCE: I'm sorry to
10 interrupt, Your Honor. I just want to make it clear,
11 perhaps, that there's someone that needs to
12 interpret.

13 A.L.J. MORENO: We just did that.

14 THE INTERPRETER: Is that -- are you
15 ready?

16 A.L.J. MORENO: Yes.

17 THE INTERPRETER: You want me to do it
18 again one -- one more time.

19 A.L.J. MORENO: Sure.

20 That's okay. So again, for anyone
21 here who speaks Spanish and would like to participate
22 today or listen to the hearing in Spanish, we do have
23 interpreters available. Feel free to come to the
24 front of the room for more information. Thank you.
25 All right.

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2 So again, cases 23-E-0418 and 23-G-
3 0419, proceedings on motion of the Commission as to
4 the rates, charges, rules and regulations of Central
5 Hudson Gas and Electric Corporation for Electric and
6 Gas Service. Up a little?

7 A.L.J. COSTELLO: I don't know how to
8 turn that up.

9 A.L.J. MORENO: I'm not sure that we
10 can do that, but I will speak up. Good afternoon,
11 everyone. We are here today for a public statement
12 hearing that was noticed on September 26th, 2023.
13 This public statement hearing concerns the proposed
14 changes in the electric and gas delivery rates and
15 practices of Central Hudson Gas and Electric
16 Corporation, who I will refer to as Central Hudson.

17 Central Hudson filed amendments to its
18 electric and gas tariff schedules on July 31st, 2023,
19 proposing to increase its annual electric and gas
20 delivery revenues effective July 1st, 2024.

21 Central Hudson proposes to increase
22 its electric delivery revenues by approximately
23 \$139.5 million, which is a 31.9 percent increase in
24 base delivery revenues or a 16.4 percent increase in
25 total revenues.

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2 For its gas business, it proposes to
3 increase its revenues -- delivery revenues by
4 approximately \$41.5 million, which is approximately a
5 29.2 percent increase in base delivery revenues or a
6 19 percent increase in total revenues.

7 The actual bill impacts of these
8 proposed changes on any particular customer class
9 would vary based upon revenue allocation and rate
10 design.

11 My name is Ashley Moreno. I am an
12 Administrative Law Judge with the Department of
13 Public Service. With me today is James Costello,
14 also an Administrative Law Judge with the Department
15 of Public Service. And together, we are responsible
16 for presiding over these hearings in the case and
17 developing a complete record for the Public Service
18 Commission.

19 We may also, as part of our jobs, make
20 some recommendations to the New York State Public
21 Service Commission, who is the ultimate decision
22 maker in this case.

23 Under New York State Law, the Public
24 Service Commission is the final decision maker, as I
25 just mentioned, and they must consider a utility's

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2 proposal. They can choose to adopt it, reject it in
3 whole or in part, or to modify the proposal.

4 The Public Service Commission will
5 ultimately decide what the Central Hudson's terms and
6 conditions of service will be. The Public Service
7 Commission has seven members; the chairperson, Rory
8 Christian, and six Commissioners, Diane Burman, James
9 Alesi, Tracey Edwards, John Howard, David Valesky,
10 and John Maggiore.

11 And we do have Commissioners joining
12 us today. So I'll start. This is Commissioner
13 Valesky. Commissioner Valesky, would you like to
14 address the participants?

15 COMMISSIONER VALESKY: Well, sure.
16 Thank you very much, Judge Moreno, Judge Costello,
17 thank you for presiding over these public hearings.
18 Public hearings are an incredibly important component
19 of rate cases. It allows the public record to be
20 developed, and we as Commissioners obviously rely
21 heavily on that public record as the case proceeds.

22 So what each of you have to say today
23 is -- is incredibly important, and I'm happy to be
24 able to be -- to -- to join all of you this afternoon
25 to -- to listen to your thoughts, comments, concerns.

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2 Chair Christian who did come with me today from
3 Albany, he will be here momentarily.

4 A.L.J. MORENO: Okay.

5 COMMISSIONER VALESKY: Okay?

6 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you. So I will
7 explain the process that we're going to follow for
8 today's hearing. Again, the purpose of today's
9 hearing is to hear from you, to give you an
10 opportunity to let the Commissioners know what your
11 thoughts are on Central Hudson's rate filing.

12 Again, these statements are going to
13 become part of the official case record in this
14 proceeding, and will be considered by the Commission.

15 We have a court reporter here with us
16 today who will be preparing a transcript of the
17 hearing, which will, again, be included in the case
18 record, and when it is ready, it will also be
19 available for public view on the Department of Public
20 Service website if you have an interest in reviewing
21 it.

22 So today's hearing is not a question
23 and answer session, and it's not an evidentiary
24 hearing, but really an opportunity for us to hear
25 from you. So I would also stress that this is not

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2 the only opportunity for comment.

3 If for any reason you don't want to
4 make a statement here today, there are a few other
5 ways that you may submit comments for the record.
6 You can do so by email, online on the department's
7 website, or also by phone or regular mail, if you
8 would like.

9 And regardless of how your comments
10 are submitted, they will all be given equal weight.
11 And there is no time limit. As long as this case is
12 pending before the Commission, you're free to submit
13 comments. So if something else occurs to you after
14 you make your statement today, please feel free to
15 send in additional comments.

16 What we will do, anyone who would like
17 to make a comment, I'll ask you to fill out a card
18 that we have on the table outside, and then I will be
19 calling people up one by one. There's a chair up
20 here, and a microphone as well, so if you would like
21 to be seated to make your statement, we would be very
22 happy to hear from you.

23 So just a reminder, because we have
24 our court reporter with us to prepare the transcript,
25 if you could please try to speak slowly and clearly

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2 so we can accurately capture your statement, that
3 would be appreciated.

4 To the extent that you have a very
5 lengthy statement, please feel free to submit the
6 whole thing in writing. We do have a number of
7 people who are signed up today, so just out of
8 respect for your fellow community members, please try
9 to keep your comments to probably around four or five
10 minutes, please.

11 Before we begin, just another
12 reminder. We do want to hear from you all, so please
13 respect the speakers and please do not interrupt
14 them. We understand there may be different
15 viewpoints. We want to hear from all of you, but we
16 also think it's important that you have ample
17 opportunity to make your comment without being
18 interrupted. So we thank you for that.

19 And to the extent that you do have a
20 cell phone, if you could just silence that again so
21 that we're not interrupting the speakers, that's
22 appreciated.

23 So again, when I call your name, if
24 you could please come up and have a seat. The
25 microphone is on and we will start with our first

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2 speaker, who is Senator Rob Rolison.

3 SENATOR ROLISON: Good afternoon. My
4 name is Rob Rolison and I represent the 39th District
5 in the New York State Senate, which includes the town
6 of Poughkeepsie where we are today, the city of
7 Poughkeepsie, and many towns in Dutchess County and
8 Orange and Putnam as well.

9 I'd like to begin by thanking the
10 Public Service Commission for holding at least two
11 public comment hearings in the 39th District, because
12 as you said, this allows citizens and community
13 stakeholders in Poughkeepsie and elsewhere to voice
14 their legitimate concerns about this proposed rate
15 increase.

16 Public input such as the statements
17 offered today will be critical in determining the
18 reasonableness of this proposed hike. I want to
19 thank Judges Costello and Moreno for listening to the
20 statement our office submitted into the record on
21 September 20th and for passionately presiding over
22 these important matters of public policy.

23 Our region faces an affordability
24 crisis. Costs associated with housing, child care,
25 groceries, and energy have all increased. And

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2 according to a recent Siena Research Institute poll,
3 more than 80 percent of New York voters consider the
4 rising cost of living to be a major problem.

5 Our constituents shouldn't have to
6 choose between a doctor's visit, feeding a family of
7 four, between lighting and heating their home, or
8 filling up the gas tank just to get to work. Yet,
9 that is precisely what a rate increase of this
10 magnitude would mean for the average resident.

11 After carefully listening to our
12 constituents here in the 39th District, I believe
13 Central Hudson's proposed rate increases of 16
14 percent on the average residential electric bill and
15 19 percent on the average natural gas bill are
16 unacceptable.

17 And I just want to be clear, I believe
18 that they are unacceptable. This rate hike would be
19 too much too fast for Poughkeepsie, Newburgh, Beacon
20 and the other communities and for all of us.
21 Therefore, I respectfully request that the Commission
22 reject the proposed increase amount.

23 In my view, stakeholders working with
24 local partners can craft a better solution which
25 meets the needs of our region's and State's growing

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2 energy demands while protecting the ratepayers who
3 are already squeezed by inflation and higher costs
4 nearly everywhere else.

5 To that end, I have spoken with
6 Central Hudson's leadership on several occasions to
7 express my concerns and to work collaboratively to --
8 toward a better outcome.

9 I've also had the opportunity to visit
10 and speak with NYISO, which is the Albany-area non-
11 profit responsible for operating our State's electric
12 grid, to learn more about what's keeping the lights
13 on and in some cases what's not.

14 Both Central Hudson and NYISO have
15 relayed their concerns that the structural pressures
16 being placed on energy supply thanks to the, in my
17 opinion, rushed Climate Leadership and Community
18 Protection Act will lead to higher costs for
19 homeowners and renters living here.

20 I've met with local small businesses,
21 including one that is selling natural gas-powered
22 fireplaces that risk the loss of its current product
23 line and the jobs that it creates. And this is
24 thanks to the ill-conceived natural gas ban that
25 Albany has been talking about.

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2 You know, one of the things I think I
3 have said a lot in -- in my time in office is that
4 you really can't manage what you can't measure. And
5 I do not believe those in charge of New York's energy
6 policy have really reckoned with the dramatic
7 immediate costs associated with its long-term
8 promises.

9 I think it's time to pause and
10 reassess those consequences responsibly before we
11 have the people of Poughkeepsie and the rest of the
12 district behind.

13 One suggestion I would offer today to
14 ease the burden of rising energy costs on families
15 and individuals is to expand the energy affordability
16 program, or E.A.P., which provides financial relief
17 to more New Yorkers. As you know, the E.A.P. is
18 currently pegged to federal poverty level thresholds
19 and provides a monthly discount on utility bills.

20 Our district office in the 39th has
21 completed over 100 cases of utility billing
22 assistance since I entered the office in January.
23 Now the majority of this case work involves middle-
24 income and working-class New Yorkers unable to pay
25 their electric and heating bills. I can assure you

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2 from having spoken personally to many of these
3 individuals, their stories will break your heart.

4 Therefore, I am calling on the P.S.C.
5 to streamline the enrollment process and make these
6 discounts available to more of our residents, like
7 here in Poughkeepsie and elsewhere in the district,
8 who are struggling to pay their payments month to
9 month. Albany can and should do better.

10 In closing, let me say that this is
11 not too late to hit the pause button on this massive
12 rate increase. I believe there's still time to take
13 into account -- into account the important first-
14 person testimony being delivered here today.

15 We lead by listening and we don't
16 double down on a mistake. The decision is yours and
17 I thank you for your time.

18 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you so much.
19 Our next speaker is John Forman. Thank you.

20 MR. FORMAN: Good afternoon. Members
21 of the New York State Public Service Commission,
22 first, thank you to Poughkeepsie Town Supervisor
23 Baisley and members of the Town Board for making Town
24 Hall available for this very important public
25 hearing.

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2 My name is John Foreman. I spent 12
3 years representing the City of Beacon and parts of
4 Town of Fishkill as a member in the Dutchess County
5 Legislature. Currently, I'm a member of the Fishkill
6 Town Board and a candidate this November for Fishkill
7 Town Supervisor.

8 Central Hudson's proposed 16 percent
9 rate hike for 2024 is outrageous and as an elected
10 representative for the Town of Fishkill, I cannot
11 endorse such a measure.

12 Southern Dutchess County has been hit
13 especially hard by inflation and the rising cost of
14 housing. For the New York State Public Service
15 Commission to allow such a dramatic increase at this
16 time would be a crushing blow to residents of our
17 town.

18 This coupled with Central Hudson's
19 faulty billing practices over the past couple of
20 years could destroy the livelihood of many families
21 here. I urge you not to allow this to happen.

22 During this difficult time, in the
23 face of economic uncertainty, I request the
24 Commission review Central Hudson's rate case and take
25 into account the well-being of the residents of

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2 Fishkill. Appropriate utility rates are vital to
3 safeguarding the interests of our community and we
4 simply cannot afford such a rate increase. Thank you
5 for your time.

6 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you so much.
7 Our next speaker will be Justice McCray. Good
8 afternoon.

9 MR. MCCRAY: Hi, I just want to thank
10 you for your time. My name is Justice McCray and I'm
11 a City Council member representing -- currently
12 representing the City of Beacon, New York.

13 I was at the public hearing last night
14 in the City of Newburgh where there were dozens of
15 people that spoke up and out against the Central
16 Hudson proposed increased rate hikes and I found it
17 important to show up today here in Poughkeepsie too
18 because it's necessary for my constituents to feel
19 represented and because they don't have that -- these
20 hearings aren't happening in Beacon and they don't
21 have access to them, I'm doing everything in my power
22 to show up and make sure that their voices are heard.

23 My constituents, my neighbors are
24 constrained. I am consistently told stories of the
25 egregious and inconsistent charges that have

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2 continued and haven't been resolved since 2021.

3 What we're experiencing right now is
4 the damaging effect of the privatization of and
5 monopoly of a public good. When our residents don't
6 have a choice in whose profit to subsidize, we're
7 pulling away from what matters to us and when it's a
8 result of impossible rate hikes, my constituents get
9 displaced.

10 Our businesses leave and everything
11 that makes our cities wonderful goes away. I'm here
12 to represent the thousands of people in my city that
13 can't be here.

14 I'm also here to echo what I've heard
15 in the room so far and what I expect to continue to
16 hear and I shouldn't be in a position of public power
17 and feel helpless toward my constituents and I won't
18 sit silently while my city and my neighbors are
19 hurting.

20 The mere suggestion of a Central
21 Hudson rate hike is appalling and I encourage you to
22 not negotiate with Central Hudson and not entertain
23 this proposal at all. If anything is to be
24 considered, it should be a rate decrease not an
25 increase. Thank you.

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2 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you. Okay, our
3 next speaker is Thomas Hayden.

4 MR. HAYDEN: I guess, I will break the
5 ice and be the first non-politician. I only
6 represent myself, okay?

7 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Would you like to
8 move that microphone up in front of the mouth?

9 MR. HAYDEN: Is it this one --

10 A.L.J. MORENO: Sure. Yes.

11 MR. HAYDEN: -- or the silver one?

12 A.L.J. MORENO: No, it's -- it's the
13 one you just grabbed, this one.

14 MR. HAYDEN: Okay.

15 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you.

16 MR. HAYDEN: Thank you and if you
17 can't hear, clap or something. Also, I will give you
18 a document of everything I'm going to read so you
19 don't have to write too fast. I recognize some of
20 your names so I feel obligated to introduce myself a
21 little bit.

22 My name is Tom Hayden. As you said,
23 I'm a degreed mechanical engineer and I've worked in
24 fuels, lubricants, and additive technology for over
25 40 years so I'm familiar with some of the energy

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2 issues that are -- that are around today.

3 I was a lab -- chemical laboratory
4 site manager so I also have some familiarity with
5 utilities, Con Ed at the time, and their billing and
6 payments at a pretty large scale. While I was site
7 manager, I oversaw a \$6 million upgrade to the
8 laboratory air handling system so I experienced those
9 surprise costs that Central Hudson is speaking about
10 on an aged infrastructure.

11 However, my complaint is how can
12 Central Hudson -- Hudson accurately charge more if
13 they can't accurately charge now? And they can't
14 explain it and when I say can't explain it, I mean,
15 I've had multiple interactions with customer contact
16 at cenhud.com, C.S.R.O. at cenhud.com, their
17 community outreach group, and their customer account
18 services.

19 When the community distributed
20 generation began in September 2021, there was a
21 period, like many where I did not get any bills and
22 then in early 2022, I received bills with four to
23 six-hundred-kilowatt hours usage for zero dollars,
24 okay?

25 So at the time my online account

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2 summary had not been available. The Central Hudson
3 website would time out and give me various messages
4 of the page just not being available so I had no
5 visibility as to what I was consuming or being
6 charged.

7 I called the call center that at the
8 time was in Florida, I guess now it's in South
9 Carolina, and after investigating over the phone they
10 could not resolve the issue and they would transfer
11 me to the main office, which I learned later was here
12 in Poughkeepsie, because they agreed my account
13 wasn't right.

14 In one of these calls, I even gave my
15 logon and password to the agent to let them log on
16 and they agreed my account needed more investigation.

17 But whether it was the call center or
18 the main office, there's never been a resolution,
19 nobody has ever reached out back to me, nothing has
20 ever come of it, and my online account is still
21 screwed up. I've tried different computers at home,
22 at work, from different I.P. addresses, all without
23 success.

24 My phone app lets me log on, but when
25 I look at my account billing and payments it says no

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2 gas or electric usage found for this account, okay?
3 So I know it's not me, I know it's Central Hudson,
4 and they've pretty much agreed for that -- with that.

5 For all this effort I have 26 unique
6 ticket numbers, many with follow-up email
7 conversations, but like I said, none with a
8 resolution. So during this time I asked for and did
9 receive summaries of my billing and payment history.

10 Each Excel spreadsheet had different
11 headings, different Excel formats, and so I commented
12 on one of the calls and they agreed these are
13 handmade upon request. So clearly, Central Hudson
14 did not have an automatic portal with customer
15 history.

16 Further, I get email reminders of
17 bills that are due, for instance, on 09/10, but the
18 date was 03/10. So I didn't know if my -- if that
19 reminder was six months ahead or six months behind.
20 I've also got notices on my account summary page that
21 there's a new bill, so I click on the link and
22 there's nothing there. There's no new bill.

23 Sometimes bills that are posted online
24 on my account aren't current, and often I get two
25 paper bills in the mail at the same time. So it

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2 seems to me the electronic, the paper, and the actual
3 cash flow transactions are not at all in sync.

4 In October 2022, I exchanged a few
5 emails with Carrine Mullen, an associate district
6 director at Central Hudson, whose name was given to
7 me by Sarah Bower Terbush, the president of
8 Wappingers Falls Hydroelectric.

9 Ms. Mullen made it clear this wasn't
10 her area of expertise, but she did make a few
11 attempts to connect me with I.T. people to address my
12 access. Unfortunately, none of those handoffs went
13 anywhere.

14 On May 31, 2023, I met Angie
15 Ottombrino of Central Hudson's Community Relations
16 and Consumer Outreach at a Wappingers Town Hall
17 event. I gave her my information and she said they'd
18 look into it and get back to me.

19 She never has. She doesn't return my
20 calls, and she doesn't return my emails. While
21 Ottombrino was on vacation, she listed Lisa Kopp, the
22 supervisor of Consumer Outreach, as an alternative.
23 So I kind of guessed at what her email would be
24 correctly, and I asked about my situation.

25 She also said somebody would return my

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2 inquiry. Nobody ever has. More recently, I've
3 regained my account summary billing and payment
4 history online, back to 2021. Now, I see there are
5 24 entries for consumption billing.

6 That makes sense, two years, once a
7 month. There are 22 entries for payments, I double
8 paid because I didn't get a bill. There are 90
9 C.D.G. bills with 3 to 12 entries on the same day.
10 There are 17 C.D.G. credits.

11 On March 23, '22 -- 2022, I had a
12 C.D.G. bill of \$11,164.20. On the same day, I had a
13 C.D.G. credit of \$11,026.20. I have 28 entries just
14 listed as reversals. I have 21 entries listed as
15 other. So in a 24-month period, my history shows 200
16 line items.

17 So I realize there's a problem,
18 clearly, but I kept paying my previous budget billing
19 amount anyway. I figured I'd be close. But when I
20 was talking to Sarah Bower at Wappingers
21 Hydroelectric, other utility customers are not as
22 comfortable.

23 The billing is clearly confusing, and
24 Wappingers Hydro cannot address, explain, or repair
25 Central Hudson's billing mistakes. So customers are

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2 opting out of the community distributed generation
3 system because they can't understand it or are
4 feeling at risk of a surprisingly large bill in the
5 future.

6 Sarah said Wappingers Hydro is losing
7 one to two customers per week because they're afraid
8 of the billing issues. Further, Central Hudson
9 hasn't figured out how much to pay Wappingers Hydro,
10 so they've provided an interest-free loan until they
11 do figure it out.

12 So clearly the C.D.G. system is
13 broken. This was something Central Hudson was
14 supposed to support, but now they're actually causing
15 a decline in the participation.

16 Prior to having online access, I
17 requested those account summaries and received three
18 different handmade spreadsheets. Using any 12-month
19 average, it never came up to \$298, my previous budget
20 billing amount. It was always less.

21 I waited until September 2022,
22 believing there would be some actual true-up, but my
23 new budget billing amount was exactly \$298. What a
24 surprise. So changes in consumption or cost, it all
25 magically came out exactly the same.

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2 Now that I do have access, if I take
3 any more recent 12-month period and average that
4 cost, it's still never -- not \$298, it's actually
5 less. Yet in September 2023, Central Hudson
6 recalculated my budget billing amount and it came out
7 to \$319.

8 So I'm using the same data that
9 Central Hudson provides, averaging 12 numbers, simple
10 math, and I come up with a different result. I
11 recently called the Customer Service Center to ask
12 for how they reached the new number and they would
13 not even assume that it was the average of the last
14 12 months cost.

15 They said they'd get back to me. I
16 mentioned all the other issues I've had and the
17 representative named Teresa Leske, Customer Account
18 Services Supervisor by name, would review my account
19 and return my call. She never did.

20 So my takeaways are customer service
21 isn't satisfactory.

22 My account is not correct and I have
23 not ever been contacted for any explanation.
24 Consumer outreach is a delusion. There's no return
25 contact even though I have reached out many times in

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2 many ways.

3 I'm calling out Angie Ottombrino and
4 Lisa Kopp in particular because that's their
5 function. From my experience in large companies and
6 with S.A.P., if my account is representative of the
7 ongoing customer billing problem, then Central Hudson
8 is far from fixing this.

9 I do not trust Central Hudson's
10 billing. I do not agree with their budget billing
11 amount, especially when Central Hudson
12 representatives can't explain it to me either.

13 I am so happy I opted out of auto pay.
14 So my opinion, Central Hudson should not be allowed
15 to raise rates until S.A.P. is fully imp --
16 implemented and vetted by an outside reviewer as
17 agreed to in the Public Service Commission interim
18 agreement of July 27th.

19 All customer complaints about billing
20 are reviewed and resolved as required in the interim
21 agreement of July 27th. Central Hudson agrees that
22 any underpayment due to their billing issue will not
23 be subject to late fees as has been threatened. That
24 Central Hudson establishes a metric that when a
25 customer makes -- makes an inquiry it is not ignored.

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2 It's one thing to have the call center
3 people not be able to make a complicated explanation,
4 but it's particularly galling that employees in the
5 home office or consumer outreach just never respond.
6 Angie Ottombrino, Lisa Kopp, and Joseph Jenkins
7 should all be called out for their poor community
8 response.

9 Finally, the budge -- the formula for
10 budget billing has to be posted on the account
11 summary web page for consumers to see. It makes no
12 sense. Simple math. We can't agree on a single
13 number.

14 So as I've explained, I've been
15 chasing this problem for two years. Everything I
16 mentioned is available for review. Please feel free
17 to ask. It's a messy story and I didn't think it
18 useful to bring every detail to this meeting and
19 frankly Central Hudson, if you had bothered to make
20 some kind of reasonable reply or apology, I wouldn't
21 be here.

22 So the action plan as Tom Hayden sees
23 it, I will pay \$298 a month until this is resolved.
24 I expect Central Hudson will eventually document my
25 new budget billing amount accurately and I expect you

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2 folks at the Public Service Commission to freeze
3 Central Hudson costs until they behave like a
4 responsible company.

5 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you.

6 MR. HAYDEN: Any questions?

7 A.L.J. MORENO: And just before we
8 move to our next speaker, I just wanted to announce
9 we have been joined by the Public Service Commission
10 Chair, Rory Christian. So Chair Christian, if you
11 would like to address the crowd, you're welcome to.

12 CHAIR CHRISTIAN: Good afternoon,
13 everyone. Rory Christian, Chair of the Public
14 Service Commission. Forgive my tardiness, I was
15 waylaid by another call. But I'm happy to be here,
16 concerned by what I've just heard, and looking
17 forward to hearing more and here to listen. So thank
18 you.

19 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you. Peter?
20 Okay, and we'll move to our next speaker, Edward
21 Peters, Sr., I believe.

22 MR. PETERS: Good afternoon.

23 A.L.J. MORENO: Good afternoon.

24 MR. PETERS: Mine's going to be short
25 and sweet. The mandates that the State's put on the

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2 energy grid and everything else is why we're all
3 here, I believe. And a lot of the people here can't
4 -- can't afford all these hike rates. I think Rob
5 pretty much summed it up.

6 But the people up in Albany need to
7 listen to the experts and not -- not their green
8 energy agenda. And we'd all be a lot better off.
9 That's all I have to say. Thank you.

10 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you. Our next
11 speaker is Vior Thompson.

12 MR. THOMPSON: Good afternoon. Can
13 you hear me?

14 A.L.J. MORENO: Yes. Thank you.

15 MR. THOMPSON: Great. My name is Vior
16 Thompson. I was in the Metro North train derailment
17 on December 1st of 2013. Therefore, I'm on permanent
18 Social Security Disability Insurance and I'm on a
19 fixed income.

20 I'll make this concise. I received a
21 letter from Central Hudson with a printout of usage,
22 I read it. My husband read it. We went through it
23 numerous times. We deemed it to be very confusing
24 and inaccurate.

25 We received a second letter from

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2 Central Hudson representative Lisa Carver. I was
3 told there wasn't estimated meter readings, that they
4 used a handheld device from the street. Just to give
5 you a frame of that, our meter is almost a quarter of
6 a mile from the street. We are flanked by a house on
7 the left, on the right, and in the front.

8 Another thing too, as everyone knows,
9 there is a class action lawsuit in process and the
10 C.E.O. of Central Hudson stepped down. I have zero
11 confidence that they read the meter properly.
12 Another side note is we have solar panels -- solar
13 panels on our house.

14 I believe there is gross malfeasance
15 with Central Hudson's business practices and I'm
16 going to leave it at that. So after all this
17 happened, I initially called to make payment
18 arrangements to avoid shut off.

19 My husband has chronic obstructive
20 pulmonary disease and needs a home nebulizer four
21 times per day, every day. I was on hold for an hour
22 and seven minutes. I left a callback number and was
23 told I would be called back within a four-hour
24 window.

25 We're going on what, three weeks? No

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2 callback. My next contact was to email. I wanted to
3 set up a payment plan stating that I could only
4 afford \$100 a month. I was emailed back by either a
5 bot or a remote customer service with a payment
6 arrangement of \$1,062.28 with subsequent monthly
7 payments of \$923.

8 The thing is too, I just received a
9 bill -- a bill and I actually think I brought it with
10 me, if you'll indulge me for a second, for \$8,604.29.
11 I have been fighting with them. I can't get a hold
12 of anybody. Nobody will call me back.

13 Another thing too, this is a side
14 note. I was misgendered when I was contacted by Lisa
15 Carver. She addressed the email to Ms. Thompson.
16 She assumed that we were a straight married couple.
17 I'm a gay married man. So that was very offensive to
18 me.

19 Nothing with this transaction,
20 anything that's been going on has been pleasant. I
21 have dealt with a lot of medical issues through this
22 whole two years when they had the changeover. I
23 wasn't paying attention. I had everything on auto
24 pay. I took it off of auto pay.

25 Nothing has made any sense at all. I

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2 want this rectified. I want this amount cleared to
3 make us whole again and I need to talk to somebody
4 that can do that for me. Thank you.

5 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you so much.

6 MR. THOMPSON: Thank you.

7 A.L.J. MORENO: And I will just
8 mention also, and sir, just before you leave, to the
9 extent that it may affect you as well, but to the
10 extent I know that we've heard from a lot of people
11 about their billing problems.

12 We do have information outside to
13 contact the Department of Public Service staff. They
14 may be able to assist you in working through with the
15 company.

16 MR. THOMPSON: Thank you.

17 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you. Our next
18 speaker is Teresa Levitch.

19 MS. LEVITCH: Hello.

20 A.L.J. MORENO: Hi.

21 MS. LEVITCH: Thank you for having
22 this meeting and allowing us to express ourselves. I
23 am amazed at the billing issues. I also have them.
24 I gave up and I just worry about my electric bill
25 every month -- is -- is basically I was unable to

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2 keep track of it.

3 I was unable to get a hold of anybody.
4 I have the same problem. I live in a condo. Our
5 meters are very close together. They sometimes say
6 they look at them. Sometimes they say they do it Wi-
7 Fi. Sometimes they say they do it every other month.

8 I don't know when, how, or what meter
9 reading process is. Same thing with billing. I've
10 had the same issues, but that's familiar and I would
11 like to address their rate increase. I apologize, my
12 printer didn't work, so it's from the cell phone.

13 I got my information from the Deloitte
14 sheet that the financial statement that Deloitte
15 provided. It was a 2002 statement, so that's where
16 my numbers come from.

17 Let's consider Central Hudson's
18 financial position. In 2022, they incurred higher
19 operating expenses, primarily due to the increased
20 commodity costs for electric and natural gas. That's
21 what they're asking for the rate increase.

22 However, Central Hudson is effectively
23 deferring costs with \$191.9 million deferred, thanks
24 to the regulatory mechanisms in place. This
25 indicates their ability to manage expenses without

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2 affecting their earnings.

3 Moreover, Central Hudson is
4 financially stable. They issued a \$196.6 million in
5 long-term debt in 2022 and demonstrated their
6 capacity to manage expenses and fund their capital
7 investment program. Their financial strength should
8 be independent of passing additional costs to
9 consumers.

10 Central Hudson has also made strategic
11 investments, particularly in the new customer
12 information system that is not working. This
13 investment aims to enhance operational efficiency and
14 customer service, potentially leading to cost savings
15 in the long run, and these investments should be
16 acknowledged.

17 The impact on customers should be
18 paramount concern. Central Hudson has shown its
19 ability to manage increased expenses without
20 negatively affecting customer services. With the
21 deferred expenses and investments in efficiency, it
22 is clear that customers' financial burdens need not
23 be increased through a rate hike.

24 In summary, the metrics and actual
25 numbers show that Central Hudson is in a solid

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2 financial position. Their ability to manage
3 expenses, deferred costs, and efficient -- and
4 efficiency initiatives make a strong case against
5 imposing additional financial burdens on customers
6 through a rate increase.

7 So to provide a clearer picture,
8 Central Hudson has \$191.9 million in deferred
9 expenses, \$196.6 million in issued long-term debt,
10 and has invested in the new C.S.I. system, which is
11 not working.

12 I urge you to consider these points
13 and make an informed decision that the company is
14 financially stable and able to take on the changes
15 that they want to make without passing that cost on
16 to the consumer.

17 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you very much.
18 Our next speaker is Barbara Hobens.

19 MS. HOBENS: Hello. Good afternoon.

20 A.L.J. MORENO: Good afternoon.

21 MS. HOBENS: My name is Barbara
22 Hobens. I live in Hyde Park, New York. I do have a
23 question. No one from Central Hudson is here?

24 A.L.J. MORENO: I -- I do not know.
25 This is not their event. This is ours, yeah.

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2 MS. HOBENS: Okay. Thank you, I'm
3 just curious. I am asking that the Public Service
4 Commission reject the rate increases requested by
5 Central Hudson.

6 First, I've spent well over 40 hours
7 in the past year-and-a-half getting incorrect bills
8 corrected and credited. When I call, I allocate
9 about an hour for hold. It's gotten better in the
10 past six months, but literally calling the first
11 thing and waiting for an hour.

12 I have compassion for the customer
13 service representatives who are as frustrated as I
14 am. They say, we're so sorry, you know, and I have a
15 list of their names. They're all very frustrated,
16 too.

17 I was kind of foolish. I had a -- I
18 had had a condo years ago with geothermal, and when I
19 moved up here, I -- I invested in having solar panels
20 installed in my garage. I thought it was a great
21 investment, a wise thing to do. Well, it hasn't
22 been.

23 I had them installed five years ago.
24 They have generated a lot of kilowatts back. I can
25 look and see that they're generating electricity. I

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2 can't afford a battery backup, but I wait to do my
3 laundry when, you know, I'm generating. I'm very
4 careful about it.

5 They have generated kilowatts back --
6 kilowatts by hundreds of hours of them, but although
7 I send them to Central Hudson, this one bill said I
8 had 500 kilowatts just recently. They charged
9 delivery for me to get my kilowatts back. That's a
10 higher cost than what the kilowatts cost.

11 My solar panel -- oh! I also want to
12 just give it for the record. My account number is 21
13 --

14 A.L.J. MORENO: Oh! Could I ask you
15 not to do that --

16 MS. HOBENS: -- Not to?

17 A.L.J. MORENO: -- for your own
18 security, please? We're happy to take it --

19 MS. HOBENS: Okay.

20 A.L.J. MORENO: -- off the record, but
21 just --

22 MS. HOBENS: Okay.

23 A.L.J. MORENO: -- it may pose a
24 security concern for your account.

25 MS. HOBENS: Oh! All right.

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2 A.L.J. MORENO: So we can take it
3 afterwards if you would like.

4 MS. HOBENS: Okay. New York State
5 gave me two years of tax credits. It's a loan that I
6 took, over \$20,000 loan for the solar panels to be
7 installed, doing it correctly with the building
8 permit, blah, blah, blah.

9 So because the panels do not generate
10 a 100 percent of the electricity that I use, I have
11 to pay delivery every month. Even the months that I
12 send 100 percent of the kilowatts back, I have to pay
13 delivery on what my panels did.

14 So -- and now here's the thing, I
15 thought about this. The New York State -- New York
16 State gave me tax credits for two years. I thought,
17 oh! This is great, I get tax credits.

18 Well, just so you know, I'm a senior.
19 The A.A.R.P. I used to go to for -- for doing my
20 taxes, them and H&R Block, they couldn't help. They
21 said, oh! We don't handle the solar, you know, tax
22 credits. But I figured it out.

23 It took me a while, but I figured it
24 out and I did it correctly. And I thank New York
25 State for doing that. But here's the problem, they

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2 gave me tax credits for panels that they thought that
3 I would be doing a good thing and generating this,
4 you know, credit -- kilowatts back.

5 So New York State invested in me
6 investing in solar energy. New York State should
7 have a real problem with the way Central Hudson is
8 acting because they gave tax credits to people like
9 me who thought they were doing good.

10 But they gave tax credits, but they
11 didn't get what they got back. New York State should
12 go after them for this because they gave me credits
13 for something that didn't happen. Okay? I just
14 don't -- I don't understand this.

15 Since I bought a house eight years ago
16 -- right now it's actually a Class C New York -- New
17 York State stream is on there. It runs on there.
18 The first thing I did was remove the oil tank because
19 there's no way it goes down the Hudson River and
20 there's no way that I'm going to be able to sleep at
21 night knowing that oil could get into a Class C
22 stream and go down to the Hudson River and Hyde Park
23 gets its water from the Hudson River.

24 So the first thing I do -- did was
25 have the expense of moving the oil tank and signing

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2 up to get, guess what, natural gas installed. So I
3 have natural gas. And here we go. The price has
4 gone up and up and up. My thermostat last year went
5 down and down and down.

6 So a -- a recent -- I just got a
7 natural gas bill from them a few -- about two months
8 ago. I used \$7 and I think it was nine cents of gas
9 on my stove, you know, to cook with, tea, what have
10 you. The delivery charge was three times that
11 amount.

12 Now that's like if I -- I love sushi,
13 okay? It's like if I order sushi, I haven't had a
14 delivery to my house in I don't know how long, but if
15 you order something delivered to your house and they
16 come and they said, okay, it's \$28 plus, you know,
17 \$10 tip.

18 Okay, it's going to be like, you know,
19 \$38, \$40. And then they come to the door and they
20 said, sorry, you know, the bill is actually \$95.
21 What? Well, I delivered it. What? So you think,
22 you know, you're getting something, you're careful
23 about use, and then you get hit with that kind of
24 delivery charge.

25 As a senior, I'm 69 years old, I have

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2 Social Security and just got the news that our Social
3 Security went up 3.3 percent -- 3 point something
4 percent in January. They're asking 31.9 percent.
5 You know -- I don't know. It's I don't -- I don't
6 know what else to do, of course.

7 Finally, the estimated bill estimated.
8 I said, so I was on with one of the people I said,
9 well, you're -- you're estimating the bill. Why?
10 You're saying you told Congressman Pat Ryan's office,
11 you're sending actual bills out. Okay?

12 No, we're estimating it. Okay, I
13 said, so you're estimating the cost and charging me
14 that estimate. So why don't I get some monopoly
15 money, I'll get my old game board out and I'll send
16 you the monopoly money.

17 I mean, no, no, I will pay for what I
18 use, you'll get paid. They gave me a budgeted amount
19 of what my budget was based on past use. And that
20 then they lowered it in June. And I'm like, lowered
21 it? No, no, no, you said I used more.

22 They can't even get their estimates
23 right. I will pay my budgeted amount and I will pay
24 what I can on what they say that I owe. But I have
25 been so diligent in trying to be a wise consumer for

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2 electricity and for natural gas.

3 It's so -- I mean, this is going to
4 sound so stupid and melodramatic, but my father, you
5 know, I went to college. I'm not -- I really thought
6 I was doing the right thing. But this -- this is
7 going to be very hard if this goes up.

8 I am asking you to reject it. And
9 it's not just me, I was able to come here today. So
10 many people on all the Facebook pages, on all the
11 towns, our next door, everyone, so upset about this.
12 Thank everybody for coming today.

13 And I just can't believe there's not a
14 line out the door, but people work. Please reject
15 this. I'm sorry about it. Thank you.

16 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you very much.
17 Our next speaker is Vincent Heffernan.

18 MR. HEFFERNAN: Hello? Which?

19 A.L.J. MORENO: That one. Yup.

20 MR. HEFFERNAN: This one? All right.
21 Hello, my name is Vincent Heffernan. I live in the
22 Central Hudson service area. I purchase natural gas
23 and electricity at the residential rates. I will add
24 that I have 45 plus years of experience in industry
25 related to power generation.

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2 And I belong to various organizations
3 such as N.F.P.A., who write the National Electrical
4 Code. I'm -- I looked at this from both sides. I
5 know people who own local power plants and sell
6 power, hydropower to Central Hudson.

7 And I know some of the conditions and
8 some of the regulations that affect the utilities.
9 So I'm looking at this from both sides. From their
10 side as well as the ratepayers. And we're talking
11 about a business. We're not talking about a public
12 service such as water systems, which are government,
13 a local government operated system, such as a water
14 supply system we have here in Poughkeepsie.

15 That is operated by a governmental
16 agency. This is still a private business we're
17 talking about, for profit. All right? No business
18 should operate for, not make a profit. They wouldn't
19 be in business.

20 However, when any employee who has
21 ever worked for anyone, you're rewarded on your
22 performance at your job. If you don't do your job
23 correctly, you do not see a raise or you're rewarded
24 based on your performance on your job. The same
25 thing should apply here.

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2 And I'm sad to say their performance
3 has been depressing. Now they inherited. This is
4 now owned by Fortis, a Canadian firm. However, they
5 inherited a lot of problems of deferred maintenance
6 by Central Hudson for many years. So now they're
7 doing more or less catch up with the infrastructure.
8 All well and good. But they're trying to do
9 everything at once.

10 And it isn't necessary to do it as
11 fast as they are doing it. Especially in light of
12 the state the economy's in, people's incomes. I
13 mean, the ratepayers can only afford so much. We're
14 -- we're pretty close to being caught up with Long
15 Island Lighting and Con Edison. The salaries up here
16 are not what they are down there. So the
17 affordability is another issue.

18 As far as service -- as far as this
19 billing, and I've been going back and forth with
20 these people for two years now on this. And I read
21 my own meter. I install electric meters. Services
22 and meters, even for sub metering. I know how they
23 operate. I have the background.

24 I know how the system works. And
25 estimated bills have been way over, way under, way

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2 over, way out of range. They have records. They can
3 go back and look at your average usage. And that's
4 how they should be basing the estimates on.

5 They have the information in the
6 system. They can go a lot closer. In some cases,
7 I've been 100 percent over on the estimates or way
8 under, and that throws your next billing way out of
9 whack. At one point, I hadn't received a bill for
10 over six months. Then I got slammed all at once and
11 I didn't know what was coming.

12 When you're retired, you're on a set
13 income. You do have to balance your budget. You
14 have to know what's coming at you. And I always pay
15 bills on time. And another thing I do, which is an
16 inconvenience for me, but it's the only safe, and if
17 you talk to your attorney you'll agree.

18 The only provable way that you paid
19 your bill is to have a written receipt in your hand.
20 If you do it over the wire, the phone company keeps
21 no records of what goes over that wire. It could be
22 a fax, it could be a voice, it could be anything.

23 Unless there's a federal wiretap in
24 place, the phone company has no record or what went
25 over. So there's no way to prove in court that you

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2 paid something when it's an electronic transfer. The
3 way I do it is I pay at a site, off site that uses a
4 Western Union transfer to Central Hudson.

5 The way that system operates. They
6 cannot print a receipt out. The machinery will not
7 print a receipt until they get a confirmation signal
8 from Central Hudson back to that location that it was
9 received. And I, that way I have a printed receipt
10 that I can prove that I paid. Little inconvenience
11 for me, but also much safer.

12 The community generation, I got out of
13 that. That was a nightmare. And I can think Albany
14 overstepped itself a bit on that. Thanks to Mr.
15 Cuomo. I mean, who I purchased, that's my business.
16 Not automatically be enrolled without even knowing
17 you were being enrolled and then have to opt out.

18 Who I buy my -- that's my business who
19 I buy my power from. As far as fuel costs and
20 whatever, Central Hudson doesn't have a great deal of
21 control over the purchase of the gas or the electric.
22 But the biggest problem we're having here is not the
23 fuel and it's the delivery charges.

24 And that is probably about three
25 quarters of the bill, service charge, delivery

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2 charge. All right? And that encompasses everything
3 that's involved with running their business. But
4 again, a lot of the infrastructure work that's being
5 done is good, but I noticed a lot of it is being
6 subcontracted out because Central Hudson does not
7 have the personnel to take on that big of a project
8 which is understandable.

9 I did notice some of the work being
10 done electrically. It wasn't -- there are codes that
11 govern how they do their installations as well.
12 Besides there are codes written by the N.E.C. for
13 buildings on premises. There is secondary wiring.

14 But there are codes that require, and
15 I do know some of those codes that what they're
16 required to do. Mostly, both ways. The utilities
17 codes and the N.E.C. codes for buildings such as this
18 and whatever, deal primarily with safety, not always
19 with capacity.

20 And I did notice on my own street, and
21 one of the Central Hudson people were there later on
22 a year or so later. And they noticed and said, yeah,
23 that's about, you know, half the size of what it
24 should be. They replaced a transformer, an older one
25 with a newer one. Half the size of the one they

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2 replaced, capacity wise.

3 And there are more homes now with
4 central air, more draw. I've recorded a voltage drop
5 from 120 down to 112. And not on my equipment, right
6 at the connection to my service leads, right on the
7 drop itself. So that wasn't in my premise and wire
8 that was on the system.

9 And 2 -- 240 down to 222 at one point.
10 So the only time they're going to respond is when
11 there's no power at all. I've called them and
12 mentioned this at times, nothing came of it.
13 However, it doesn't affect a lot of equipment, but
14 there are certain things that, over a period of time,
15 will be affected by running under voltage.

16 We're paying for 120 volts and 240
17 volts, and that's what we should be receiving. They
18 re-fed the main trunk on my street which is on the
19 opposite side of my street with a cable two sizes
20 smaller than when they're feeding, which is not what
21 you do.

22 That'd be like feeding a fire hose
23 with a garden hose. No, it should be the same size
24 at least, not two sizes smaller than what it's
25 feeding. And one time I did have a -- I have another

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2 pole on my side of the street which my house and two
3 other houses, one to either side come off of a piece
4 of cable from there over to the main run on the
5 opposite side.

6 Now it was old. This is probably a
7 90, 100-year-old single wire insulation gone. It
8 came loose one leg. The wind blew, it shorted to the
9 other one. Looked like lightning. They came, pulled
10 it apart. Turned the power back on. Tripped the
11 transformer, actually.

12 A few hours later, bang. Again, it
13 blew itself apart. Now they had to change it. So I
14 told them, I said, listen, I explained who I was and
15 what I did. I even told them what size cable you
16 need. How long, whatever. They come up. They had
17 the right stuff. They did the job, no problem.
18 Okay.

19 But as I say, a lot of the
20 subcontractors are doing work, but they're only doing
21 what Central Hudson has instructed them to do. The
22 engineering, the plans are done by Central Hudson.
23 They're following plans given to them by Central
24 Hudson.

25 So we can't blame them, they're just

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2 doing the job as they've been instructed to do. So
3 you say -- you say, okay, who designed this? You
4 know? And talk about capacity? Forget about it.
5 We're not really increasing capacity that much as far
6 as E.V.s or anything that goes.

7 Because that's all well and good.
8 Increase your grid and all that. We do not have the
9 power plants here to push it. You know, and you're -
10 - you know what you're doing with the E.V.s? You're
11 transferring the pollution from one site to another.

12 Sure, you're not doing it on the
13 vehicle. You're putting the pollution to a power
14 plant. Now you're going to increase the need for
15 burning fossil fuel because the solar and wind
16 represent maybe 3 or 4 percent. It's not enough to
17 carry the day for everything, including the E.V.s.
18 And you're losing efficiency.

19 Because now you're not putting the
20 power right to the vehicle from the source on the
21 vehicle. You're doing it from a power plant, through
22 transmission equipment, and you're losing efficiency.
23 If it wasn't for the tax credits, a lot of people
24 wouldn't bother with it.

25 The solar, the same thing. Check your

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2 -- check your contract for your roof, and see what
3 happens if you install solar on it, and you wind up
4 with a leak. And if you have an old roof and you've
5 done it, which isn't very smart.

6 If you have to take them down and put
7 them back up again in order to replace the roof,
8 you're looking an average of a \$1,000 charge to
9 remove them and put them back up. That's provided
10 you don't do any damage to them in the process.

11 So on the ground, I can see it. On a
12 roof, no. And given the weather conditions we have
13 here, you don't see that much of it. Obviously,
14 because it's not that practical here. On the West
15 Coast, yes. But back to this billing.

16 Now, -- and I work for a corporation
17 with 30,000 some employees. And anytime they --
18 introduced a new computer system or any new software,
19 they would run a pilot program first to make sure
20 that there were no problems with it before they went
21 system wide with it, which is what should have
22 happened here.

23 And this probably never would have
24 been an issue. Run a pilot program for six months, a
25 year. Make sure that there are no issues with it

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2 before you go system wise and do away with the old
3 system and not have it to fall back on.

4 So again, I -- I don't think we should
5 reward poor performance. Hold the line for now.
6 Wait. Another thing politics enters this too, we
7 don't know what's going to happen in '24. I think
8 we're going to see some massive change one way or the
9 other. It's going to affect everything.

10 So hold the line for a while and cut
11 back a bit on the new construction, the
12 infrastructure. Just do what is absolutely the worst
13 first then, but not try to undo 30 years of neglect
14 overnight and bill the customers for it.

15 As I -- I am up in age now, my health
16 is not that good. I am moving south. I'm getting
17 out of here. And I have the background. I am going
18 to go off grid. If you live in a municipal area, you
19 can't do that. This is something where the location
20 has to be right in order to be off grid.

21 But I do understand the equipment, and
22 it is possible to do it, efficiently. And that's
23 what I intend to do. I don't care how low the rates
24 are. But again, the rates vary from where you are.

25 If you're down south, somewhere, let's

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2 say, in the southeast, you have a lot of hydropower
3 from Tennessee Valley Authority or the C.T.V.A. It's
4 mostly hydro. So the power is going to be cheaper
5 down there.

6 Natural gas is cheaper down there
7 because most of the wells are in the southern states.
8 Another thing that used to be on Central Hudson's
9 bill was a fuel adjustment charge. Okay. Now it's
10 incorporated into the delivery charges.

11 But there was a reason for that
12 because there are friction losses on any kind of
13 medium that goes through a pipeline, whether it's
14 water, gas, oil, anything. The longer -- that would
15 be like trying to run a garden hose from here to
16 Florida. You wouldn't get a drop out of the other
17 end.

18 A.L.J. MORENO: Uh-huh.

19 MR. HEFFERNAN: Okay? You -- the
20 further you go, the higher -- the same thing with
21 transmission lines. The further you go, the higher
22 the voltage has to be. There are losses. But with
23 the gas, with friction losses, every so many miles
24 there are recompression stations, all right?

25 They look like air compressors,

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2 they're actually gas. Now --

3 A.L.J. MORENO: Sure. And Mr.
4 Heffernan, I apologize for interrupting. But we do
5 have a lot of other speakers, so ask you to try to
6 wrap up.

7 MR. HEFFERNAN: Right. Okay. I'll be
8 done in just a second here.

9 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you so much.

10 MR. HEFFERNAN: They consume electric
11 for the motors to run them. So past that point, the
12 gas is a higher rate because that charge for the
13 electric to run that recompression stations is
14 included into that rate from that point on.

15 So you know, there's a lot that comes
16 into it. But the problem we're having here is
17 billing, performance billing, and too much on the
18 infrastructure all at once. And we're at the
19 breaking point right now. I should be living
20 comfortable with my retirement income and I'm not.

21 And that's why I'm leaving and I'm
22 moving. So hopefully, and I'm having a one-on-one
23 next week with Central Hudson. I scheduled an
24 appointment. And hopefully, I can address some of
25 these problems. Now as far as the response, yes, I

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2 echo what the people have already said to you. They
3 are not getting back to me. They hang up while I'm
4 online with them.

5 You know, I've given up trying. So
6 you know, it's a sad thing when you have to wind up
7 filing a lawsuit against them and taking them into a
8 courtroom to get results. You shouldn't have to do
9 that. Shouldn't have to get to that point.

10 But you would have to, you know, make
11 your own judgment on this, but look at all these
12 cases and look at the facts. Thank you.

13 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you very much.
14 Our next speaker will be Chloe Smith.

15 MS. SMITH: Good afternoon.

16 A.L.J. MORENO: Good afternoon.

17 MS. SMITH: Public Service Commission.
18 My name is Chloe Smith. I'm a resident of
19 Poughkeepsie.

20 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Closer to the mic,
21 please?

22 MS. SMITH: My name is Chloe Smith.
23 I'm a resident of Poughkeepsie. I am here to voice
24 my opposition to any kind of increase for Central
25 Hudson. I've been battling with them for about three

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2 or four years right now with irregular billing, over
3 billing. I have a bill for winter last year, last
4 past winter, that's thousands of dollars.

5 I'm out of my house at least two weeks
6 out of the month. And when I'm there, I keep the
7 thermostat really low. I'm currently retired and on
8 a very fixed income. And for the first time, I'm
9 afraid that I may be pushed out of my home because of
10 these erroneous billing.

11 I have meters that have been there on
12 the unit that I have since 1990. You call Central
13 Hudson. You try to get information about what's
14 going on with your bill. You can't get through.
15 I've been on hold for an hour, at least on multiple
16 occasions.

17 Including last week, Thursday, and I
18 had to call Ryan's office. And he told me to go
19 online. They told me to go online and post a
20 complaint on his site. I had said to Central Hudson
21 when they were overbilling me, how are you reading
22 the meter when I can't see you from my camera?
23 Because it's old meters. And they had said to me,
24 oh, we're doing it electronically. I said, there's
25 no way you can do that electronically when I have a

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2 meter that's been there with the unit since 1990.

3 And I have pictures of it. Couldn't
4 get through to Central Hudson after that. I had to
5 call the Public Service Commission because I
6 developed a leak in the back of my house going into
7 the basement. And I felt sorry for the reps because
8 they're pretty nice, but they were saying, oh, you
9 need a supervisor.

10 And I was on hold multiple times for
11 at least an hour to try to get a supervisor to
12 approve having my service turned off temporarily, so
13 they can do the digging in the back to -- to patch
14 the leak that was coming in.

15 Public Service Commission called me
16 right away and they said, we're going to have someone
17 from Central Hudson call you. Subsequently, someone
18 from Central Hudson did call. Now to get my service
19 back on, I went through the same situation. Total
20 incompetence.

21 I couldn't get my service back on. So
22 once again, I had to call Public Service Commission
23 to have them call Central Hudson to have someone
24 come, you know, give me an appointment to have
25 someone come out to turn my service back on.

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2 I said, listen, I have to eat. I have
3 to take a bath. I have to use utilities in my home,
4 and I have no service. Central Hudson has been doing
5 this for a while and I don't know what type of
6 oversight is there for them in terms of their
7 billing, but it's totally erroneous.

8 I received estimated billing for
9 months. And after receiving estimated billing, then
10 I got a humongous bill saying that this was actual.
11 I said, how is that possible? I can't see you
12 reading the meter in the back. I have cameras back
13 there.

14 And they were, we're reading it.
15 We're reading it. And they can never give you an ex
16 -- explanation that's logical, and I feel it's an
17 affront to my intelligence when you come at me with
18 those kinds of explanations.

19 You're telling me that that we're
20 reading it, we're reading it, and I can't see you, so
21 you're telling me, what are you saying to me in that
22 respect. That my camera is not working. It's
23 working. I can see the raccoon in the back. I can
24 see the possum in the back. I can see everything in
25 the back except you.

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2 So I reject any kind of increase for
3 seniors like myself, people who are retired, we're on
4 a fixed income. I don't qualify for HEAP or any of
5 those things. Rolison was speaking about it earlier
6 that they need to change those, you know, eligibility
7 requirements, because I'm right below, a little bit
8 above the cutoff.

9 And Central Hudson is great at telling
10 me, go to Social Services and apply, okay? And I
11 keep telling them, I'm not eligible for it. So after
12 getting multiple voicemails telling me that I'm at
13 risk of having my service turned off because I didn't
14 pay my bill. I had a one-on-one with them on May,
15 and I started to pay it, but I don't agree with it.

16 So I have not been healed, and nothing
17 has rectified with my bill. And I'm sure there are
18 others here and who are not here also that have the
19 same issue. I reject it. I reject it and I don't
20 know what type of oversight is going on in terms of
21 them being able to get these kinds of approval for
22 increases which they've gotten in the past.

23 I reject it and I think a whole lot of
24 other people do. Thank you.

25 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you. Our next

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2 speaker is Carmen McGill.

3 MS. MCGILL: Hi. Mine won't take very
4 long. I live in the city of Poughkeepsie. My name
5 is Carmen McGill. And I noticed from the time there
6 was the two-month billing cycle to the one-month
7 billing cycle. The bill on the one-month billing
8 cycle is as much as the two-month billing cycle used
9 to be. So it -- it has doubled.

10 In the meantime, I keep my temperature
11 in my house at 60 degrees all the time, except in the
12 summer it's down to 50. My bill does not indicate
13 that low amount of service. I do not have -- I do
14 not have central air, I don't have any air-
15 conditioning in my home.

16 I find that the bill is outrageous.
17 In trying to contact them, they have said that they
18 need an outside agency to come in to check to see all
19 around your house as to whether or not, what it is it
20 that might be causing it to be so high.

21 I have not been able to do that.
22 Central Hudson used to do that. Now they have
23 outsourced it, it appears. So I'm -- I'm just here.
24 I guess, I'm just like everybody. I'm, you know,
25 complaining about what they do, how they do it, and

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2 how they bill us on whatever it is that they do.

3 And before there was a delivery
4 charge, they were delivering it. They were
5 delivering our -- our -- our gas and oil without a
6 delivery charge. Now, all of a sudden, we have a
7 delivery charge for something that that's what
8 they're in existence to do anyway.

9 So I -- I don't understand that. I
10 don't understand the Public Service Commission giving
11 them the authority to be able to do that. And I have
12 been to Public Service Commission events like this
13 before. And it just, it doesn't seem that I've
14 gotten any kind of satisfaction with the result that
15 they give Central Hudson every time.

16 And so I just hope that at this time
17 that people, that you -- you folks will listen and
18 actually do and act on behalf of the people. Thank
19 you.

20 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you. Our next
21 speaker is Klaus Yoder.

22 MR. YODER: Hi. Good afternoon.

23 A.L.J. MORENO: Good afternoon.

24 MR. YODER: Everyone can hear me okay?

25 A.L.J. MORENO: Yes. Thank you.

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2 MR. YODER: All right. Thanks for
3 this opportunity to comment. I'm here today, like
4 everyone else because everyone in this community is
5 experiencing an affront to common sense and decency
6 with these proposed rate hikes.

7 Working class and middle-class people
8 are already struggling to pay their bills before all
9 of this is coming about. When I talk to people in my
10 community about these rate increases, they don't
11 believe me. It's incomprehensible that a company
12 that has done so poorly can have their hand out for
13 more money.

14 They're -- Fortis makes over a billion
15 dollars in profit per year, the people who own
16 Central Hudson. Their C.E.O.s are handsomely
17 compensated for tens of millions of dollars. When
18 people finally start to believe me that I'm serious
19 when I'm talking to them about these rate hikes, the
20 reaction is a mix of anger and fear.

21 Many of the people I talk to in my
22 neighborhood, my church, my kids' schools, they're
23 already behind on their bills. They're already
24 behind. They, you know, more is not possible. They
25 don't know what they're going to do.

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2 And this region is being squeezed by
3 utility costs and by unaffordable rents and
4 speculative real estate already. This whole thing
5 represents not only a money grab on Central Hudson's
6 part, but also a message to the working-class people
7 and the middle-class people who've lived here and
8 worked here their entire lives, that they don't
9 belong here.

10 That if they can't afford that they
11 should, they should go someplace else. We've already
12 heard people talk about that, that they're going to
13 leave. It's a message that you don't belong here.
14 Destabilizing our communities is making people more
15 financially insecure, and it's actually going to cost
16 the State more money.

17 Because when people are pushed the
18 edge when they're vulnerable, they're going to have
19 more encounters with the criminal justice system and
20 incarceration. That's expensive. That's more
21 expensive. So Central Hudson shouldn't be raising
22 rates. They should be lowering them.

23 Instead of relying on private
24 monopolies, our community should have more control
25 over these costs and how this power is generated. We

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2 should be thinking about renewable energy and a just
3 transition to help working class people in those
4 sectors.

5 So that's all I have to say today, and
6 I appreciate your time here. Thank you.

7 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you. Our next
8 speaker is Eric Eckley.

9 THE AUDIENCE: He had to leave.

10 A.L.J. MORENO: Pardon?

11 THE AUDIENCE: He had to leave.

12 A.L.J. MORENO: Oh, thank you.

13 Lorraine -- Lorraine Cucci.

14 MS. CUCCI: Thank you for doing this
15 on behalf of everyone that lives in Dutchess County.
16 I live in Pleasant Valley. I've been living there
17 for over 30 years. I moved up here from Long Island.
18 Currently now, I'm a single professional retired
19 woman.

20 I lived on a -- I live on a fixed
21 income. Last year, in October, I received a bill
22 from Central Hudson, stated -- stating that I had to
23 pay over \$800. I owed them \$800 in addition to what
24 I was paying all along. So right away, I contacted
25 Central Hudson and I documented all my conversations

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2 with them.

3 They told, I asked for a supervisor.
4 Well, I never did get to speak to a supervisor. And
5 I was put on a payment plan, which I told them I
6 already paid and they continue to tell me I still owe
7 them money on that money.

8 And then I get a bill last month, over
9 a \$1,000 bill. Like, okay. So I want to reiterate
10 what everybody has said here. You know, when I was
11 working full time, I worked for a huge pharmaceutical
12 company. And when you didn't perform well, there
13 were repercussions, okay? Shareholder profit, et
14 cetera.

15 This company, Central Hudson was
16 allowed to bring in a software company to change
17 their billing, upgrade their billing, et cetera.
18 Didn't -- didn't do a pilot study, which they should
19 have done. They should have piloted the billing
20 system, okay? You don't just roll out a system and
21 figure, oh, all's going to be well.

22 Meanwhile, the program had tons of
23 glitches, okay? But they rolled it out anyway
24 because it was on somebody's performance review to
25 get this done, okay? Well, it didn't work out well

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2 because today, and I'm sure previous today, you have
3 heard a lot of complaints from citizens about their
4 billing.

5 I can sit here and start talking about
6 what has happened to me. I have written nasty notes
7 to them because you can never get people on the
8 phone. I was connected with the Wappingers
9 Hydroelectric plant and I was getting charged on my
10 bill.

11 Like, why am I getting charged to be
12 part of a hydroelectric plant? I should be getting
13 credited. Some -- some months I was getting
14 credited, some months I was getting charged. I spoke
15 to Sarah, the president over there, and she said,
16 they're not doing it right.

17 And I'm like, dear God. So I opted to
18 get out of the program, which was supposedly going to
19 be for my benefit, okay. How can your organization
20 in all good conscience, allow more charges for this
21 company when they can't even get their billing system
22 right.

23 And it's -- it's been in flux since
24 they rolled it out. So let's get to the root cause
25 of the problem. And they -- they cannot seem to get

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2 to the root cause because they don't want to get to
3 the root cause. They want to keep charging people
4 more money and more money and screwing things up to
5 the point where people are going to get so fed up,
6 they're not going to complain anymore, and they're
7 just going to sit back and take it, okay?

8 But can't let that happen. You have
9 to help us, all right? You're probably getting
10 charged just as much. Okay. You're probably getting
11 exorbitant electric bills and gas bills, okay? So
12 I'm sure you're not happy about any of this.

13 So in your good conscience, you have
14 to understand, we're all, whether we're middle class,
15 lower middle class, upper middle class, retired,
16 we're all going -- we're all dealing with this crap.
17 It's crap, okay? And I'm afraid to open my bill
18 every month. I'm afraid.

19 And when I saw that over a \$1,000
20 bill, I'm like, yeah, and what are you smoking? I
21 mean, it's ridiculous, okay. It's so infuriating,
22 infuriating and upsetting. You know, why do I got to
23 get stressed out because of this? To live here in
24 the Hudson Valley and to live in my home.

25 I'm -- I'm in my home over 32 years.

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2 I've never experienced bills like this before.
3 Never, never. Why? And how did Central Hudson
4 become -- how did they get bought by a foreign
5 company? Who allowed it to happen? Okay? And we're
6 suffering now. We're suffering.

7 So how did they get over on this by
8 introducing a software billing program and screwing
9 things up? Who allowed it to happen? Do they not
10 have any oversight? I'm -- I'd like to know. Okay.
11 How did that happen? Is no one like watching them?
12 Is no one like saying you did it wrong, you have to
13 fix it? They're getting away with bloody murder,
14 okay?

15 Really, that's what it boils down to.
16 And we're all suffering. So I oppose any rate hike.
17 I think their system should be scrutinized
18 thoroughly. Whoever needs to go in, recheck their
19 billing, get it fixed from the root cause, okay? All
20 right? And get it done.

21 Get it fixed because we're all
22 suffering here. That's all I have to say.

23 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you. So again,
24 thank you. We -- we want to hear from everyone. We
25 do have quite few speakers who are remaining yet, so

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2 I'll just, as a gentle reminder, if we could try to
3 keep it around five minutes, that would be
4 appreciated.

5 Our next speaker is Ann Sutherland.
6 Ann Sutherland? No? Our next speaker then will be
7 Aldith Williams. Okay. Claire Cousin.

8 MS. COUSIN: Hi. My name is Claire
9 Cousin.

10 A.L.J. MORENO: I'm sorry.

11 MS. COUSIN: I'm a Columbia County
12 Legislator and I'm running for State Assembly here in
13 District 106. I'm here to speak out against the
14 proposed 30 percent Central Hudson rate hike. It's
15 frankly insulting that Central Hudson would be
16 demanding a rate hike to increase their shareholder
17 profits while they are still sending working people
18 incorrect bills with little to no explanation.

19 I have family and friends in the town
20 of Poughkeepsie and southern Columbia County that
21 would be hurt by an increase. But because of the
22 ongoing statewide affordability crisis, stopping this
23 increase isn't enough.

24 People are being ripped off every day
25 by for-profit utilities like Central Hudson, Natural

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2 -- National Grid, and NYSEG. We need to decrease the
3 utility bills that families and working-class people
4 are forced to pay.

5 I'll repeat that. The Public Service
6 Commission should pass a rate decrease. We also need
7 to call on Albany to pass the New York Heat Act to
8 cap utility bills at 6 percent of household income
9 for low to moderate income households. That's just
10 common sense.

11 In the long term, we need to take --
12 we need a State takeover for these for-profit
13 utilities. People deserve to have control over their
14 utilities. We deserve public power. I'm a working-
15 class mother of three children, and have struggled to
16 pay my utilities at various points in my life.

17 Do you know how scary it is to have
18 your heat shut off when it's cold outside? No family
19 deserves to experience a shut off. I urge the Public
20 Service Commission to think of the people who will
21 suffer from an increase. Please reject this unjust,
22 outrageous proposal. Thank you.

23 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you. Our next
24 speaker is Daniel Atonna.

25 MR. ATONNA: Hi, my name's Daniel

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2 Atonna. I live in the city of Poughkeepsie and
3 organize all throughout the Hudson Valley with For
4 The Many and C.S.A. Unfortunately, I am a Central
5 Hudson customer. Last year, Central Hudson attempted
6 to charge me almost \$600 for gas and electric. This
7 was about triple our usual bill.

8 They blamed it on a computer glitch.
9 I know many people who were also affected by these
10 billing errors. Now Central Hudson has the audacity
11 to demand yet another round of rate hikes. On their
12 website, Central Hudson lists their total 2022
13 electric and gas revenues as a little over a billion
14 dollars.

15 Their proposed rate hikes would result
16 in a 30 percent increase in their base delivery
17 revenues. Central Hudson's profits and monopoly are
18 guaranteed by the State. That is why they operate
19 with impunity, without respect for their customers.

20 We deserve publicly controlled
21 utilities that use renewable energy. We need public
22 power. The mass movement organized around the
23 recently passed Build Public Renewables Act proves
24 that New Yorkers are more interested in investing in
25 a public utility like the New York Power Authority

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2 rather than in a for-profit utility like Central
3 Hudson.

4 As climate change continues to worsen,
5 its impacts on our utility grid will grow. There are
6 much needed investments Central Hudson could be
7 making, such as burying power lines. But as a for-
8 profit company, they don't think that way.

9 For-profit companies will only ever
10 operate under the principle of short-term profit
11 maximalization. Their primary concern is enriching
12 their C.E.O., Christopher Capone and their
13 shareholders. New Yorkers have to struggle every day
14 to pay their bills.

15 We struggle, so they can profit. Does
16 that sound fair to you? I'm tired of being told that
17 working class people need to make sacrifices.
18 Fortis, Central Hudson, and their shareholders need
19 to make some damn sacrifices. Their profits are not
20 more important than our lives.

21 I'm calling on the Public Service
22 Commission to reject the rate hikes in whole, and I'm
23 calling on any New York State legislators watching
24 this hearing to pass common sense legislation like
25 the New York Heat Act to cap utility bills for low to

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2 moderate income households.

3 We don't need rate hikes. We need
4 utility debt forgiveness. We don't need rate hikes.
5 We need a rate decrease. We don't need rate hikes.
6 We need a State takeover of the corrupt, failing,
7 for-profit corporation called Central Hudson. Thank
8 you.

9 THE AUDIENCE: Thank you. Thank you.

10 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you. Our next
11 speaker is Megan Deichler. Hi.

12 MS. DEICHLER: Hi, there. Thank you
13 so much for hosting this meeting. My name is Megan
14 Deichler, and I am a member of the City of
15 Poughkeepsie Common Council representing Ward 8. And
16 I am here to speak in opposition of these rate hikes.
17 The rate hikes would increase, an average of \$1 per
18 day for gas and \$1 per day for electric.

19 That's \$60 per month for homes. My
20 constituents are struggling. I hear from families
21 and individuals who don't know how they're going to
22 make ends meet each month. And this is on top of the
23 past couple of years of dramatic variances from month
24 to month for energy costs from Central Hudson.

25 Personally, I've seen this myself.

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2 One month last winter my bill was \$200. And then a
3 couple months later in the springtime, when you would
4 think the bills would go down because I'm not using
5 heat, my bill jumped to almost \$800.

6 How can the average person and family
7 budget with such unpredictability? The idea of a
8 proposed rate increase brings increased anxiety to
9 already chronically stressed people. Cron -- Central
10 Hudson is owned by a mega corporation called Fortis,
11 which owns five utilities.

12 The C.E.O. makes over \$5 million a
13 year and their former C.E.O. makes \$10 million, made
14 \$10 million. Every year, Central Hudson brings in
15 millions of dollars of guaranteed profit. If Central
16 Hudson needs funds, it shouldn't be requesting it
17 from ratepayers. When its C.E.O. makes millions and
18 the company continues to make record profits each
19 year.

20 Inflation does not affect a meg --
21 mega corporation like Fortis the same way it affects
22 everyday people like us. While the working class
23 continues to fall behind, Fortis has made record
24 profits despite inflation. You all should not allow
25 Central Hudson to charge a single cent more.

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2 Energy is not a luxury. It's a basic
3 need. And we are not -- we should not be at the
4 mercy of a company that has a monopoly on the energy
5 industry. We have no other option but Central
6 Hudson. I urge you all to not pass this rate
7 increase and, in fact, consider a rate decrease.

8 And just to echo what some other folks
9 just mentioned. Any legislators watching should also
10 co-sponsor and support the New York Heat Act, which
11 would cap utility bills for working class and middle-
12 class people. Thank you so much.

13 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you. Our next
14 speaker is Philip Van Itallie. And I apologize if I
15 got that wrong.

16 MR. ITALLIE: Hi. My name is Philip
17 Van Itallie. I've been a Central Hudson customer for
18 over 50 years. And I'm objecting to a lot of the
19 things that have happened since they became a
20 foreign-owned company. A for-profit company that
21 does not put money back in the Hudson Valley, but
22 carries it off.

23 We had a local company that at least
24 tried to show that it was interested in our
25 community. So I have some specifics that I have in

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2 mind. Clearly, there's a billing problem. It hasn't
3 been cleared in no way should they get anything other
4 than a penalty from the Public Service Commission
5 that gets refunded to the ratepayers.

6 This is going on and on. You've had
7 many, many examples. The delivery costs are not, in
8 my opinion, clear or understandable to the people who
9 are paying these extra fees which, in my judgment,
10 are more like a profit line.

11 It -- we don't see this is the amount
12 of money that's going for these kinds of things and
13 where that money goes. It appears to be really a way
14 for them to collect them, Fortis or Central Hudson to
15 collect money, but it doesn't -- we don't see that
16 where that's going.

17 And I do think that if you're going
18 for a rate increase and you're saying you need more
19 money, it would be nice to know how you're using it
20 and how you're expecting to use it, not just we need
21 more because that sounds more like a profit.

22 I think just one last piece. It was
23 decided that they needed to do monthly billing
24 instead of bi-monthly billing. And in so doing, not
25 only did they stop doing regular actual usage, they

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2 made wild estimates.

3 Okay, sorry. They made estimates that
4 were not substantiable. I'd really like to see
5 actual billing exclusively. I think that they can
6 afford that, and I think that if people are asking
7 that they can't wait for two months for them to read,
8 then they can go on the budget plan.

9 It shouldn't be, well, we're going to
10 wait until we can figure it out a real, every two
11 months billing. That way they don't charge a little
12 bit extra across, like you're a new customer each
13 month. That's a billing arrangement that enriches
14 them.

15 I don't see that we should be
16 enriching them. I think that we should be getting a
17 service. It's a monopoly. They are agreeing to
18 produce, provide electricity and gas, and it should
19 be at a fixed amount over what it actually costs
20 them.

21 They have managed to completely change
22 the way the business works. So they don't have to
23 show that information and you don't have to audit it
24 on the basis that it used to be many, many years ago.
25 I know life has changed, but we really should get

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2 some protection. And a rate increase for their
3 terrible management and poor service is not
4 justified. Thank you very much.

5 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you. Our next
6 speaker will be Joseph Lombardi. Is that you, sir?

7 MR. LOMBARDI: Good afternoon. Thank
8 you for being here.

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

10 MR. LOMBARDI: I've been a resident of
11 this county for 51 years. Presently, I don't use any
12 electricity generated or actually transmitted by
13 Central Hudson. In fact, I have solar panels and I
14 feed the grid. I would like to think that what I'm
15 doing is the right thing.

16 My carbon footprint is hardly
17 detectable. The car I drive is powered by the sun.
18 That is, the panels that generate electricity feed
19 the batteries every night when my car is in the
20 garage. As I said, my footprint is hardly
21 detectable.

22 I would like to think that Public
23 Service Commission would like to have a rate
24 structure that encourages that kind of use. Energy
25 generation is capital intensive. It's also energy

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2 intensive. The more we can reduce the need for more
3 and more energy, the better the planet will be.

4 I'd like to think that you would be of
5 the same mindset. I do thank you.

6 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you so much.
7 Our next speaker is Dominick Bizzaro.

8 MR. BIZZARO: Good afternoon.

9 A.L.J. MORENO: Good afternoon.

10 MR. BIZZARO: My name is Dominick
11 Bizzaro. And I moved up here from Westchester
12 County, Yonkers in 1993. And the reason why my wife
13 and I moved up here is because I could not afford
14 Yonkers anymore. I couldn't afford Putnam. I
15 couldn't afford Westchester.

16 So we moved up here in beautiful
17 Dutchess County. I worked for I.B.M. I worked for
18 Sony. I'm a retired Metro North employee. I worked
19 in a substation with big power. So I understand
20 power. Anybody on the panel here from Central
21 Hudson?

22 A.L.J. MORENO: No.

23 MR. BIZZARO: Of course not. What I'd
24 like to say is, I'm a retired Metro North employee.
25 I have a good pension, but I'm finding now that I

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2 have to go back to work. My taxes are through the
3 roof. Now with this 30 percent, it is insane what
4 you guys are doing to the public, especially to your
5 seniors.

6 I don't know if you guys can do
7 anything about this, because Central Hudson is
8 Central Hudson, and they're going to do whatever they
9 want. But I've worked since I was 15, I am now 64.
10 I have never, in my life, gotten a 30 percent raise.
11 Ever.

12 And my Social Security -- well, it's
13 railroad retirement. I'm going to get a 2.7 percent
14 raise. Between my taxes and my electric bill, it --
15 it -- it just -- it's -- I'm going to have to leave.
16 There's no way I can afford this and you're pushing
17 people out of this beautiful area.

18 And for the life of me, I can't
19 understand why my wife has to fight and fight. Where
20 I can't even hear the yelling anymore because I have
21 to go outside because she's -- she's yelling at this
22 person and they're in Florida.

23 She calls a Central Hudson associate
24 and they're in Florida. They have no idea what's
25 going on. They have to look through a computer.

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2 Sometimes a computer is wrong. In fact, most of the
3 time, the computer is wrong.

4 My wife has a printout. They sent her
5 a printout. Well, that printout doesn't match this
6 printout. And that printout doesn't match this
7 printout. Then she gets two bills. One is -- is
8 250, the other one is 500. It's like, it -- this is
9 insane.

10 It's like, how does anybody run a
11 business like that? Again, I don't know if you guys
12 can do anything. But as you can see, there's a lot
13 of pissed off people, not only with just Central
14 Hudson, but also with the town, with the -- with the
15 -- with this -- this -- this blank checkbook of -- of
16 -- of killing people with the taxes.

17 I -- I just don't understand it. I
18 really don't. It's something has to be done really
19 on both ends, not just Central Hudson, but also the
20 taxes. It's getting crazy. It really is. And I --
21 I feel bad because I came up to this beautiful area,
22 so I could live.

23 And now I have my son who can't afford
24 the -- the rents that are -- that are -- he's -- he's
25 back home. I mean, he's a 30-year-old man that wants

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2 to -- wants to live on his own between the electric -
3 - he says Dad, between the electric and the rent and
4 the heat and all that, he says, it was like \$3,000 a
5 month. It's crazy. So now you add 30 percent on top
6 of that. I really do hope you guys go back and say,
7 listen, Central Hudson, 30 percent, no go. You want
8 a 2 percent, 3 percent, yeah, okay. I think most
9 people would realize.

10 All right. 30, you know, 3 percent, 2
11 percent would be fine. But a 30 percent, you guys
12 are insane. Thank you.

13 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you. Our next
14 speaker is Ann Bizzaro.

15 MS. BIZZARO: Good afternoon. My name
16 is Ann Bizzaro, and I did yell at the customer
17 service representative because they were getting
18 nasty. I myself worked in customer service for 20
19 years for a telecommunications company.

20 And when I went into customer service,
21 they trained us for a year, so that we would be able
22 to hopefully handle any situation that came up as far
23 as billing. And that's why I get very frustrated. I
24 got a bill, one bill for my regular budget.

25 And because I overpaid the month

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2 before, it was \$171. I paid that bill, one, two,
3 three. And -- and a couple of days later, I get
4 another bill for \$256. Okay. So I'm calling,
5 calling. I got the representative from Florida.

6 And I was told I would get a phone
7 call back. Never did. So me being persistent, I
8 called a couple of days later and happened to get the
9 same representative again. And I said, I need to
10 speak to someone in New York and Poughkeepsie and
11 preferably a manager.

12 I've been battling with them for two
13 years for bills. I got copies of all my bills from
14 2021 through now. I started out at some point with a
15 \$4,000 credit. I never saw that on my bills. I got
16 all these printouts, and then I got another set of
17 bills which was normal for what I've been starting
18 out from February to now.

19 My budget plan payment was 255 a month
20 starting in February, and now, three days ago, I was
21 on the phone with customer service for two hours
22 being pulled -- put on hold for every -- I -- I was
23 on -- put on hold six times by the representative.

24 And this is a Poughkeepsie
25 representative named Nicole. She did not know what

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2 she was doing, couldn't answer the questions, okay?
3 And I got frustrated and I said, I need a manager.
4 Okay. That didn't happen. Bottom line is, nothing
5 got resolved. Nothing.

6 Prior to that, a year-and-a-half ago,
7 I put two complaints into the Public Service
8 Commission. I never heard anything about that
9 either. How do they get away with this? How do they
10 get away with it? And then they're asking for an
11 increase? For what?

12 They don't even have customer service
13 that can help you. They can't help you because they
14 don't know what they're doing. They don't train
15 properly. And if you're going to be in the business,
16 your customer service is your -- your main front
17 line.

18 Any other business that would have
19 customer service like that would be out of business.
20 And they're asking for a rate increase. Delivery
21 charges on this other bill that was \$256, the only
22 thing I can -- I can attribute it to and they can't
23 verify it is that they were -- I was paying my budget
24 of 255 from February to now, and now they told me it
25 should have been 287 from February.

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2 So are they making up the difference?

3 I don't know. No one can answer me. Okay. Now
4 today, I got another bill. My husband doesn't know,
5 but I paid the 256. And now I got the bill -- bill.
6 And it was \$534. I don't know where to go with this
7 anymore.

8 We're on a fixed budget. We're both
9 retired. I can't afford this up and down, round and
10 round and not getting any answer. What -- when do
11 they get to -- when can they step up to the plate and
12 explain these things? And this only happened when
13 this new company took over.

14 I mean, they're from Canada. Do your
15 thing in Canada, but don't -- don't do it over here
16 and -- and make people crazy and get frustrated. And
17 you can't even set up a meeting to go in there and
18 discuss your bills.

19 They won't get on the phone with you.
20 The managers will not get on the phone with you. She
21 put me on hold and said, all right, I'll check this
22 out. She told the manager, this bill, these two
23 bills are for the same time period. How can that be?

24 The manager didn't even look at it and
25 said, no, that's her new bill. No, it wasn't my new

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2 bill. I just got the new bill today. It's -- it's
3 out of control. When -- when are they going to stop
4 being able to just bulldoze people?

5 And what happens when we can't afford
6 to pay our bill and we get shut off? But I'm not --
7 I'm going to pay my mortgage before I pay my electric
8 bill and put food on the table for my family before I
9 pay my electric bill.

10 Luckily, we haven't gotten to that
11 point, but who knows? Next year, what's going to --
12 what can happen with the way things are. They don't
13 deserve an increase. They need to decrease and get
14 their billing correct. You can't go willy-nilly with
15 this and then have customer service represent --
16 representatives that can at least represent your
17 company knowing what they're doing.

18 They have no idea what they're doing.
19 The girl actually told me during my last
20 conversation, I don't work for cut -- Central Hudson.
21 I'm just a representative. So is she a temp? What
22 is she, you know, how do you say that?

23 How do you say that to a customer
24 that's been fighting with you guys for two years to
25 get her account straight? You just can't do it.

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2 They -- they definitely cannot justify this increase.
3 My gas on my last bill, my supply was \$5.36 cents.
4 The delivery charge was \$42. How do you justify
5 that? How do you justify it?

6 And now, they want more? For what?
7 They can't even come out. I have wires in front of
8 my house that have leaves growing on them, right? We
9 get a bad storm. Those wires are going to come down.
10 They won't even come out and take care of that.

11 And my son works for -- for another
12 electric company. And he hears this when he's at his
13 job. Customers are get -- are fed up. We're fed up.
14 It's something's got to be done and an increase, it
15 can't be done. Please. It's just not justifiable
16 and get them to get somebody in to train their
17 representatives.

18 And if it means firing the managers,
19 then do it because they need somebody that knows what
20 they're doing there, from the top down. The C.E.O.,
21 I don't care. Do something because it's not working
22 the way it's going now. Everyone here has basically
23 been here complaining about the rates and the
24 billing.

25 Got to do something about it. We've

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2 got to do something about it. I can't be forced to
3 move out of New York State. I have a special needs
4 daughter that's in an adult residence, and I don't
5 want to move out of New York State because I can't
6 afford to pay my Central Hudson bill.

7 And yes, my husband spoke about the
8 taxes, but that's something different from this. We
9 just need to get things under control because it's --
10 it's -- it's crazy. It's really crazy. And Public
11 Service Commission, please do something because I
12 didn't even hear anything about my two complaints
13 that I put in.

14 Thank you for your time.

15 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you very much.
16 Our next speaker is Tara Vamos.

17 MS. VAMOS: Hi there. My name is Tara
18 Vamos. I live in Cold Spring, New York. I've been a
19 Central Hudson customer since, I guess, 2002. And
20 like other people here, I've experienced the Russian
21 roulette of current Central Hudson billing.

22 I want you to know that I have knocked
23 doors with a group called Beacon -- Beacon for
24 Climate Action Now in passing a gas ban a year ago.
25 When we knocked doors in Beacon, every other person

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2 that we spoke to had a problem with their billing,
3 like, you are only seeing the very tip of the
4 iceberg.

5 I believe that the P.S.C. that you
6 should ask Central Hudson to reimburse people at a
7 rate of \$20 per hour for every hour that they spend
8 on the phone pursuing rectifying wrong bills. It is
9 incredibly taxing and incredibly expensive of
10 people's time to try and undo the crazy -- crazy
11 insane mistakes in billing that are happening.

12 It is absurd that Central Hudson would
13 ask for a 30 percent rate increase on top of that.
14 It is absolutely crazy, but I think it's them putting
15 down, like, it's them showing themselves and it would
16 really be ideally met with the utility distribution
17 being taken over by the State.

18 It should be a public utility. It is
19 clearly being horribly mismanaged to all of the
20 residents' disadvantage by having it be privately
21 owned. It is a grand miscarriage of justice. It's
22 not what anybody expects when they talk about like
23 capitalism or anything like that.

24 This is -- this is just having a
25 parasitic monopoly suck the region dry. I urge New

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2 York State Legislators and the Governor to pass the
3 New York Heat Act and cap people's utilities at 6
4 percent of their income and for lower-income
5 customers.

6 And I think that's -- that's about all
7 I have to say, except that I'm also -- could you
8 please make Central Hudson and the other utilities
9 actually act as if they are going to try and comply
10 with the 2019 climate law that was passed because
11 just waiting to see if they go past the -- the
12 different timeframes that have been set out is not
13 how to get anything done.

14 The reason why there were times set in
15 the future was that things like utilities could
16 actually make plans to change what they were doing,
17 to meet things, not expand the gas network as quickly
18 as possible until the last moment when they went, oh!
19 no, we missed the deadline now let's try doing
20 something different.

21 It's -- it's going to cost all of us
22 ratepayers more -- not that we could tell from bills
23 that we get because as I said, it's random. The
24 billing is like a roll of the dice. Thank you very
25 much.

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2 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you. And our
3 next speaker is Eleanor Evans Chiarepa. Apologies if
4 I got that wrong. No? Gunner Warden.

5 MR. WARDEN: Hi there.

6 A.L.J. MORENO: Hi.

7 MR. WARDEN: My name is Gunnar Warden,
8 and I'm the Deputy Chief of Staff for Assembly member
9 Didi Barrett, who could not be here today, but wanted
10 me to relay her remarks to you all. And it's going
11 to kind of sound funny because I'm not Didi Barrett,
12 but I'm about to say I am Didi Barrett and I
13 represent the 106th Assembly District and chair the -
14 - and chair of the assembly's committee on energy.

15 I wanted to thank the Public Service
16 Commission for conducting these in-person public
17 hearings related to the Central Hudson Gas & Electric
18 Corporation rate case. I both advocated for and
19 requested in-person public hearings in a letter sent
20 on August 29th, 2023 to the Public Service
21 Commission.

22 My district is larger -- largely
23 rural, and there are many barriers to broadband
24 access, making virtual hearings difficult if not
25 impossible to attend. These in-person hearings are

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2 vital to ensuring access to this public process.

3 Up and down the Hudson Valley
4 ratepayers have seen staggering utility bills and
5 confusing statements that defy any real explanation
6 from Central Hudson. My office has continued to
7 provide resources to assist consumers, related
8 concerns to the P.S.C., and called on Central Hudson
9 to consider relief remedies, including installment
10 plans and waiving late fees.

11 While Central Hudson has made efforts
12 to rectify these billing issues, their billing
13 practices are still under investigation and are being
14 reviewed by the P.S.C. Central Hudson has now
15 proposed a double-digit rate increase requesting an
16 additional \$139.5 million in annual electric delivery
17 revenue, and then an additional \$41.5 million
18 increase in gas delivery revenue.

19 If approved, these increases would
20 increase the additional cost of \$1 per day for
21 typical electric and natural gas customers. New York
22 State has now faced three major rate cases with
23 double-digit increases in the last year alone. I
24 strongly support the goals of the Climate Leadership
25 and Community Protection Act.

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2 However, the implementation of the
3 C.L.C.P.A. cannot fall on the backs of struggling
4 ratepayers alone. These rate increases are simply
5 unacceptable for already cash-strapped New Yorkers.

6 And I would only add that I've heard a
7 lot of big numbers today, but we had a -- a
8 constituent contact our office a couple of months
9 ago, who had a bill that was usually a couple of \$100
10 and they received an estimated bill of \$44,000
11 through the estimated billing system. So with that,
12 thank you for the time.

13 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you very much.
14 Our next spot -- speaker is Joseph Rogers.

15 MR. ROGERS: Good afternoon, my name
16 is Joseph Rogers. I've been a Central Hudson
17 customer for 53 years. And the complaint I have is
18 I'm living on a fixed income between Social Security
19 and retirement of \$3300 a month, and I watched my
20 Central Hudson bill go up from January to now when
21 I'm paying it, it used to be \$350 a month on a budget
22 plan, which I switched to natural gas in 2013
23 thinking that is going to go down, but it did not it
24 -- it keeps on going up.

25 And my last bill, they said I owed

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2 \$366, so I sent that and they're now upping my budget
3 plan to \$375 a month because I don't want to get hit
4 with a big old bill and whatnot there. Now, how was
5 it -- or how are the retired people going to afford
6 to pay their rate increases because I was looking at
7 the delivery charges.

8 And they -- they raised them so high
9 and also the rates of what they charging for the gas
10 and electric, you know, how can they do that and get
11 away with when people -- there's a lot of people
12 living on fixed incomes, you know, I don't know how
13 long I'm going to be able to -- to keep on paying the
14 bill, you know.

15 And you know, like I said, I switched
16 to natural gas from oil, I pay \$10,000 to Central
17 Hudson switched me over. So I -- I don't know, I --
18 I honestly don't know what's going to happen in -- in
19 next year, you know, I don't know if I'm going to
20 start digging a hole to China or what because I can't
21 pay my bill. That's all I have to say. Thank you.

22 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you very much.

23 MR. ROGERS: You're welcome. All
24 right.

25 A.L.J. MORENO: Our next speaker is

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2 James Ryan.

3 MR. RYAN: Good afternoon, my name is
4 James Ryan, Central Hudson customer for 30 years.
5 I'm an E.V. Time-of-Use user. And I'm someone that's
6 worked with the P.S.C. extensively. I've had two
7 cases open to -- each of them for a year. It's very
8 hard to make progress with the P.S.C.

9 Nonetheless, thank you for rejecting
10 the onshore-offshore wind which was a 71 percent
11 inflation and effectively rejecting the \$2 billion
12 C.H.P. Express increases, they were just abhorrent.

13 However, I've read the NYSEG in the
14 Rochester Electric & Gas rate decisions, I'm shocked.
15 You issued a -- on your website, a stunning victory
16 with a press release. But those rate customers are
17 going to see 20 percent increases each year for the
18 next three years, 20 percent.

19 All you did was arbitrarily cut -- cut
20 what the request was in half. I think what you're
21 hearing from everyone here is when you get outrageous
22 requests you should be doing to those requests, what
23 you did with wind, reject them. I'm not sure why
24 they weren't rejected.

25 Responding to your -- to

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2 Administrative Judge Moreno filing P.S.C. complaints,
3 your process is broken. I think you've heard from
4 several people here today.

5 The people that you have working the
6 phones, the people that you have working emails
7 aren't interested in their jobs. I'll give you an
8 idea of what happens. When you file a complaint, you
9 don't hear from the utility within the required 14
10 days.

11 My guess is if you did your own
12 analysis, that gets rid of maybe 80 percent of the
13 complaints because people don't know that they have
14 to go back to the P.S.C. within a 14-day period of
15 time, and say, hey, they didn't get back to me. They
16 just think it's more of the same from Central Hudson,
17 they don't respond.

18 So what happens if you do contact the
19 P.S.C. within 14 days is you don't hear from the
20 P.S.C. then. How can that be? And if you call and
21 say, hey, what's going on? They'll say, what's your
22 complaint number and I -- the response is I don't
23 have one, you didn't give me one yet.

24 And they said, well, we don't know
25 what you're calling about. It's crazy. It is

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2 absolutely crazy and to suggest that people go to the
3 P.S.C. you must know your process is like this. I
4 think that's shameful.

5 Another thing is you won't take
6 multiple complaints at the same time. How can that
7 be? You heard the gentleman that's in the same
8 situation that I'm in, where he's got C.D.G.,
9 Community Distributed Generation. He had an enormous
10 number of complaints.

11 But your agency will only take one
12 complaint from him at a time. How could that be?
13 All of this serves to protect the utility. It -- it
14 -- it brings down the complaint numbers, it -- it
15 promotes inaction and this shouldn't be the case.

16 I'm also disappointed we can't display
17 any collateral here. It's 2023. It's not 1960
18 anymore. How come there's not screens up where I can
19 show what's going on with my bills, show you that a
20 utility can't take two numbers and add them and get
21 the right result. This is insanity. 30 percent --
22 asking for 30 percent, that's not a rate increase.

23 They're sending a message to us.
24 They're sending a message of intimidation, saying we
25 can screw up this badly and still put in a 30 percent

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2 increase against you. There's no other response to
3 this request -- request than to say no.

4 Prior to today, New York State P.S.C.
5 has allowed Central Hudson to pass all of their
6 expenses related to mistakes other than the decision
7 that was made in June, the compromise that was made
8 in June with -- with -- with the utility to pass it
9 all to us.

10 If you overlay -- and I put it in my
11 public comment, if you overlay the stock price of
12 Fortis with the Dow Jones -- sorry, Dow Jones utility
13 average. There's no difference. They're virtually
14 identical.

15 What that tells me as the ratepayer is
16 this utility, despite tremendous amounts of
17 malfeasance hasn't suffered one bit, not one bit.
18 Those stockholders still have all their money.
19 Meanwhile, we're getting sacked with rate crease --
20 rate increase after rate increase.

21 Customer satisfaction by Central
22 Hudson's own reports are below 60 percent -- below 60
23 percent. Your report on their customer satisfaction
24 as of 2022 is at 63 percent. Your October 2022
25 report says that Central Hudson has the highest

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2 complaint rate in New York State, five times Con Ed's
3 rate.

4 This is for -- for escalated
5 complaints, five times per 1,000 customers or
6 whatever it is. This utility is becoming unhinged,
7 and nothing's being done about it. I don't know if
8 you're familiar if the board is familiar with the
9 J.D. Power 2022 customer satisfaction ranking for
10 utilities.

11 Central Hudson ranks in their category
12 second to last and last place is Versant. Versant
13 electric is the Maine utility that voters go to the
14 ballot to make it public in November. How can this
15 be? They are -- if Versant goes public, Central
16 Hudson would be the worst performing utility in the
17 mid-range, J.D. Power 2022 consumer satisfaction
18 ranking. And you're considering a 30 percent rate
19 increase for them?

20 As many have testified before me, the
21 billing system is indecipherable. And if you have a
22 C.D.G. just forget about it. I'm not going to go
23 into detail they have I've put detail in my -- I've
24 put detail in my public comment.

25 But there's reliability issues when it

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2 comes to billing, you don't get bills for months and
3 months, and then all of a sudden you get six, right?
4 Use of terms. They use very technical terms and then
5 somewhere along the way, they decided to change all
6 the terms. So it's all new terms now.

7 And you go to a New York State P.S.C.
8 complaint and -- and you ask a simple question to the
9 representatives there. Okay, you use all these
10 terms. Can you define each of these terms for me?
11 You know what the answer is? We'll have to get back
12 to you.

13 Okay. They're there to discuss my
14 bill at a hearing and the answer to the headings, the
15 labels of the terms of the bill. They have to say
16 we'll get back to you, it's in the recording.
17 Despite spending more than 100 hours trying to
18 reconcile my bill and I have a spreadsheet that the
19 P.S.C. is also, has -- you have that as well.

20 I've been unable to. I've met with
21 Central Hudson on numerous occasions, trying to
22 reconcile this bill. It's indecipherable. I
23 challenge anyone to do it, LILCO did less. If you
24 look at what LILCO did, they did far less than what
25 Central Hudson did.

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2 The New York State P.S.C. needs to
3 send a firm message to utilities in New York State.
4 If you do this, we're just going to take you over and
5 it's going to go public. Thank you.

6 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you very much.
7 Our next speaker is Camilo Rojas.

8 MR. ROJAS: As you said my name is
9 Camilo Rojas. Thank you, I really appreciate you
10 take the time and be awake through all these
11 complaints for this long time. I feel like we are in
12 a 1984 book, film where you are dealing with somebody
13 who is not responding to anything. They owning --
14 they owning you.

15 I don't think they are asking for a
16 raise. They are asking for raping you. That's
17 actually what is happening in that case. I -- I
18 think all -- all my previous -- the previous speakers
19 have been extremely eloquent on the complaints about
20 Central Hudson.

21 I probably had some anecdotal elements
22 like receiving a bill 1920, then on 1921, I'm sorry,
23 2021 less -- less than -- than -- than it is my first
24 time talking in public with strong inquisitive
25 (unintelligible) and the eloquence of my previous

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2 speakers.

3 The issue is -- the issue is, in this
4 case, is the anecdotal element is going from a bill
5 for \$163 a month to then getting a bill for \$5,000.
6 And I have been for two years trying to get someone
7 to actually to sit and going through the numbers to
8 explain why is that -- that amount.

9 A.L.J. MORENO: I'm sorry, just one
10 second. Gentlemen, could you please just not
11 interrupt the speaker, we're having trouble hearing
12 him. Thank you.

13 MR. ROJAS: And I understand my accent
14 is -- is not interesting to you, but it's okay. I
15 can translate to Spanish or Italian or French or
16 German if you would like to, but I -- I think we've
17 been we have been trying to be respectful to each
18 other. Thank you for calling that.

19 The issue is they had a billing
20 problem. And the issue is they had a customer
21 service problem. And it is extremely frustrating
22 where you are not able to actually to deal with
23 somebody in person and try to solve this issue.

24 If somebody would be able to explain
25 why it is that different of bill probably we won't be

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2 here now, but it has not be the case. It is
3 interesting to see that fuzzy math they had been
4 using when they said you had an estimate bill and
5 then you understand an estimate then it is something
6 which is not real.

7 And when they do the reading it
8 shouldn't be reflecting what they were estimating
9 either higher or lower, but not these 5,000
10 astronomical number which doesn't correspond to that
11 -- that reality. We are living in a house, it's only
12 my wife and myself in a house from 1840, a small,
13 tiny house and what means is -- when you call them
14 they usually tell you things where like oh! your
15 water pump is too old.

16 And you feel like my water pump was
17 the same water pump when I was paying \$163 a month,
18 how it happened now that water pump becomes \$5,000?
19 What means is it is disrespectful for the customer to
20 think they are stupid and they won't be able to
21 understand what is happening in there.

22 It is outrageous to have something in
23 a capitalist system which is a monopoly where we
24 can't go and -- go to a competitor and choose another
25 source if we choose, there is no choices. You either

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2 be served by them, which is a mis-services and I --
3 like I said before is -- is if they are not asking
4 for a raise they are asking to rape you.

5 And if we can -- if we can know like
6 raping anyone then why we can allowing them to do
7 that with impunity. And somehow who -- to whom is
8 the first time I am here and I feel like to whom you
9 go to protect the customer. Where is the protection
10 for the customer?

11 Where we stop these nonsensical and I
12 will tell -- I will tell honestly the people I have
13 been talking in Central Hudson, they have been very
14 polite, they have been very nice. However, they are
15 incapable to solve the problem, and it's extremely
16 frustrating.

17 And I hope the Commission will do
18 something more drastic than just listening to us and
19 be awake. I -- I -- I hope you go on and be awake
20 and do some action. Thank you.

21 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you very much.
22 Our next speaker is Lauren Hollick.

23 MS. HOLLICK: Hello.

24 A.L.J. MORENO: Hi there.

25 MS. HOLLICK: I'm a Central Hudson

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2 customer. I'm born and raised in Dutchess County and
3 currently live and work in Ulster County. I have one
4 full-time job and three part-time jobs. I'm still
5 struggling to pay my bills each month. The Hudson
6 Valley is struggling to keep younger residents and
7 I'm hearing also today, all residents in the Hudson
8 Valley.

9 They're leaving for more affordable
10 locations. And this is my home. I'm trying not to
11 do that, but it's looking better and better every
12 time I get bills, including Central Hudson. I live
13 in a very small apartment with its own meter. And
14 I've had issues with the estimated billing practices
15 for years.

16 They're not accurate or easy to read.
17 And when I call and ask for help reading them, they
18 just send me different forms depending on the person,
19 which all say different information. So that's been
20 very frustrating.

21 My estimated bills are the same for
22 when I'm home every day, as to when I am away and
23 caring for family members with health issues, even if
24 it's for a full month. And whenever I talk to
25 Central Hudson about that they tell me that I should

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2 read my own meter and submit what it says for -- let
3 me see what I wrote, for accurate reading and
4 accurate billing.

5 Why am I being told to do Central
6 Hudson's job? I afford my home. This is ridiculous
7 and needs to be investigated or continuously
8 investigated. They aren't even doing the bare
9 minimum for their customers which is accurate billing
10 and customer service.

11 I've worked 14 years in Dutchess
12 County and seven in Ulster. I'm not even 30 yet, I'm
13 struggling. I went to Dutchess Community College in
14 SUNY New Paltz. Again, this is my home. I can't
15 afford this and 1000s upon 1000s of others can't
16 either.

17 Help us, we don't know what to do.
18 We're not getting good information from Central
19 Hudson. And we are struggling. I urge you and all
20 listening to reject Central Hudson's rate increase.
21 The whole Hudson Valley is struggling. Thank you.

22 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you very much.
23 Our next speaker is Timothy Morreale -- Morreale,
24 sorry about the pronunciation.

25 MR. MORREALE: All right.

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2 A.L.J. COSTELLO: Raise the microphone
3 in front of your mouth.

4 MR. MORREALE: Yeah. I put this in
5 front of me.

6 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you.

7 MR. MORREALE: Hi, I am here. I grew
8 up in the Hudson Valley. I actually used to applaud
9 Central Hudson, their responses used to be
10 tremendous. They are two storms, they're one of the
11 better companies they keep the power on. That's the
12 people. I'm military. I was sent away. I came
13 home. I was sick. Just give me a minute.

14 A.L.J. MORENO: Sure.

15 MR. MORREALE: Anyway, working, I've
16 never used as much. I just got a \$4,732 bill. The
17 next day it said \$22.24 cents. This is online
18 because I was told to use the online billing. It's
19 accurate because they can't give me any answers.
20 Everything you've heard here -- I've heard from
21 Central Hudson.

22 I've gotten to the point now where
23 I've decided that the electricity will always be on
24 in the new justice system and three hots and a cot.
25 I've learned to survive, shut my electrical off. I

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2 can show you right here. Just got a threatening call
3 from Central Hudson yesterday. You want to see it?
4 It's right here.

5 A.L.J. MORENO: Would you -- could --
6 read it into the record for us.

7 MR. MORREALE: I'm not. It says that
8 I must respond to get the situation under control.
9 You must respond immediately, Central Hudson. So the
10 best thing is, calling there I simply ask is two and
11 two four anymore. It makes no sense that all the
12 time I've been in the residence in Pleasant Valley,
13 I've never used as much electricity as 4007 because
14 I've never been home.

15 Electric gets shut off and people are
16 watching the house. I've been in and out of there
17 for different reasons; for my military service and
18 for my job. I currently am self-employed. I got a
19 bill when I was in the hospital for a month.

20 No one home -- came home to a bill
21 that said 2000 and something and I said what's going
22 on? I couldn't get any answers. I've gotten to the
23 point now where I literally just don't even answer,
24 you're doing nothing. You're -- you're going to shut
25 my electric off no matter what. That's the bottom

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2 line. You're going to do it, I'm not going to pay
3 it.

4 They said they corrected it. They
5 sent me little messages on email and everything. Oh!
6 well, your bill's been corrected. I said but wait a
7 second two and two still isn't four and they can't
8 give answers, no answers.

9 Central Hudson was never that way
10 until they joined this other company. You could
11 always get an answer, you could always rely on them.
12 Now, you don't know whether you're calling Florida or
13 whether you're getting a local representative.

14 I've tried to get a meeting with Pat
15 Ryan, I thought he was here, that's what I came here
16 for it today. I guess I made a mistake. There is
17 nobody here from Pat Ryan, to help us with this. He
18 said, I -- I guess it was in Hyde Park yesterday.

19 But since I'm here, is there any way
20 we can get a hold of a Central Hudson person that can
21 actually explain the bill?

22 A.L.J. MORENO: Well, I -- I can't say
23 if anyone from Central Hudson is here because this is
24 -- this is the Department --

25 MR. MORREALE: Uh-huh.

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2 A.L.J. MORENO: -- of Public Service
3 event. But I can tell you that we do have some folks
4 from our outreach office outside who will be able to
5 hopefully help you with your bill and coordinating
6 with Central Hudson.

7 MR. MORREALE: They can actually like
8 get a person to explain the bill and sit down because
9 that's what Pat Ryan is trying to do.

10 A.L.J. MORENO: Okay. I can't make
11 any promises.

12 MR. MORREALE: Oh! no, that's fine,
13 all right.

14 A.L.J. MORENO: But I -- I would urge
15 you to talk to them when you go outside because they
16 should be able to help to facilitate that.

17 MR. MORREALE: And there is one other
18 thing. I want to put solar panels on my house. I
19 can't, I'm in a mobile home, I can make that
20 structure strong enough to handle mobile home, my
21 roof can handle it but nobody will do it because
22 they're not allowed to and I guess, in New York,
23 that's what I'm told, is that true?

24 A.L.J. MORENO: That I don't know.

25 MR. MORREALE: Well, I -- I hope

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2 somebody can answer that too because I'd love to go
3 solar and go on my own, or I'll use a campfire or a
4 Justice Department. There's going to be three hots
5 and a cot there.

6 A.L.J. MORENO: Thank you very much.
7 Okay, well, that was the last speaker card that I
8 have. So we have heard from all of the folks who
9 have registered to speak this evening.

10 I do want to remind everyone of the
11 opportunity that you have to submit comments
12 throughout this process. On -- on the notice of
13 today's event, there was a list of different ways
14 that you can submit comments either in writing or
15 online or by phone.

16 And again, they're all given equal
17 weight. So please feel free to do that. In
18 addition, I did want to also mention that there is
19 another public statement hearing this evening in
20 Kingston at six o'clock at the Res -- Restorative
21 Justice and Community Empowerment Center.

22 So if anyone is interested in joining
23 us there, we would be happy to hear from you. So we
24 thank you all very much for your time, and your
25 attention, and sharing your comments, and your

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2 experiences with us. We really appreciate it. So
3 thank you and have a very good afternoon. Thanks, go
4 off the record.

5 (The hearing concluded at 3:30 p.m.)
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2 STATE OF NEW YORK

3 I, DANIELLE CHRISTIAN, do hereby certify that the
4 foregoing was reported by me, in the cause, at the time
5 and place, as stated in the caption hereto, at Page 1
6 hereof; that the foregoing typewritten transcription
7 consisting of pages 1 through 111, is a true record of all
8 proceedings had at the hearing.

9 IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto
10 subscribed my name, this the 25th day of October, 2023.

11

12 DANIELLE CHRISTIAN, Reporter

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