



STATE OF ILLINOIS
OFFICE OF THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR
JAMES R. THOMPSON CENTER, SUITE 15-200
Chicago, Illinois 60601

PAT QUINN
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

March 2, 2007

Dear Editor,

The people of Illinois are fed up with unfair electric rates, and it's time for consumers to take action.

That's why I am calling on the General Assembly to pass the Ratepayer Relief Act of 2007 – legislation to roll back electric rates, repeal the “reverse auction” system, and give Illinois voters the right to recall Illinois Commerce Commission members

We need to make our commerce commissioners take responsibility for allowing Ameren and ComEd to inflict these back-breaking price increases on their loyal customers.

It's no surprise when giant corporations put profits ahead of people. But as ratepayers, we have the right to expect our ICC commissioners to stand up for consumers against corporate power and corporate greed. If they don't, then we should have the right to recall and remove them from office.

As Illinois consumers know from looking at their utility bills, Illinois' nine-year statewide freeze on electric rates ended on Jan. 1 of this year.

Under the results of the deeply flawed “reverse auction” process – results that were unanimously approved by the Illinois Commerce Commission – basic consumer electric bills rose by 25% to 100% statewide in January. Thanks to a little-noticed provision of the rate hike, “all-electric” households served by Ameren have seen their bills soar by as much as 200% to 300%.

The ICC is supposed to balance consumer interests with the legitimate financial needs of the utility companies. If voters believe these commerce commissioners have lost sight of consumers' needs, as these skyrocketing bills suggest, then ratepayers should have the right to recall those unresponsive commissioners and send them packing.

Under existing law, the Illinois Commerce Commission's members are appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Illinois State Senate. Legislation (House Bill 1916, sponsored by Rep. Mary E. Flowers and Rep. Mike Boland), would require commerce commissioners to stand for retention or recall on the ballot at the first general election after their appointment.

If a commissioner fails to win retention votes from a majority of voters, that commissioner will be recalled. Under this proposed law, all four of the current members of the ICC would face the voters on the 2008 ballot.

To learn more about these issues, share your concerns, and to help the cause of fairness in utility rates, please visit my website at StandingUpForIllinois.org.

The ICC's decisions have a direct impact on the pocketbooks of every consumer in our state, every single day. It just makes sense to make these commissioners accountable to the everyday people they are supposed to serve.

Sincerely,

Pat Quinn
Lt. Governor