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Governor Walker Needs to Intervene in PSC “Fixed Rate” Fiasco

Gov. Walker’s appointed majority on Public Service Commission should not approve plans to charge residential customers more for using less energy.

Madison – Today State Senator Tim Carpenter (D-Milwaukee) called on Governor Walker to intervene and slow down Wisconsin public utilities’ rush to dramatically shift a greater portion of a residential customer’s monthly bill to a “fixed charge” rather than a charge that fluctuates each month depending on how much power the customer uses.

This change will require approval of the Public Service Commission. Governor Walker has appointed two out of the three members of the Public Service Commission.

In a letter sent to the governor today, Senator Carpenter stated:

The public utilities are seeking approval for this change from the Public Service Commission, for which you have appointed two out of the three board members. WE Energies, the state’s largest utility, is proposing to start with a 75% jump in its fixed charge; Wisconsin Public Service Corp. and Madison Gas & Electric Co., are proposing similarly astonishing raises to its fixed charges for residential consumers.

The controversy regarding these proposals is growing. On October 8, 2014 I testified before the Public Service Commission to state my strongest opposition to this proposed change. Over 400 concerned residents attended this hearing in Milwaukee. I testified that seniors and those on fixed incomes will be hit hardest by this change. For decades, my constituents and I have all tried to do our part to cut our energy bills and to reduce wasted energy. We keep thermostats lower in winter and higher in summer.

We should be able to lower our bills by using less energy. Shifting of higher fixed costs onto residential customers encourages waste and is the wrong direction to take. Given that manufacturing and other businesses are already treated at an advantage for their exemption for paying sales taxes on electricity, further punishing residential consumer for saving energy makes no sense.

I ask that you immediately direct the PSC to hold off on any decision regarding the increase of fixed charges and allow time for further public comment and discussion of the harmful effects of this proposal on residential consumers.

A copy of this letter accompanies this release.

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