



*Public Service Commission of Wisconsin  
Comments on Docket 5-UR-111  
P.O. Box 7854  
Madison, WI 5707-7854*

October 3rd, 2024

**RE: Sen. Larson (7th District) comments on rate case by WEC Energy Group**

Commissioners and Staff of the Public Service Commission (PSC),

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. As a WE Energies customer and a member of the Wisconsin State Senate, I speak today not just on my own behalf, but on behalf of my neighbors across the 7th Senate District and all customers affected by this proposed rate increase. Once again, WE Energies is putting profits (and their large industrial customers) ahead of what's best for the people of Wisconsin. With that in mind, I respectfully request that the Public Service Commission **deny the requested rate increase**.

Despite a strong jobs market and flattening inflation, people across America are having to deal with stubbornly high costs for a host of everyday needs, namely food, housing, and healthcare. Southeast Wisconsin is no different. And yet, WE Energies is asking to increase residential customers' electric rates by 9.29% in 2025 and another 8.58% in 2026. That's nearly \$24 extra per month for the average residential customer once fully phased in.

At the same time, WE Energies is giving a sweetheart deal to its large corporate customers, whose rates go up by just 5.53% and 1.78% over the next two years. Asking financially struggling families to choose between food and their electric bill is bad enough - the least they could do is make sure corporations pay their fair share.

Regardless of who pays, there is the question of whether these increases are justified. After all, WE Energies boasted a \$5.88 billion gross profit for the twelve months ending June 2024, a 9% increase from the prior year. Even using the more comprehensive measure of net income, WE Energies still came out ahead over the same time period, with \$1.37 billion, a 1.2% increase year-over-year.

WE Energies customers have already been subject to 7 increases since 2013. The increases included in this docket would make 9 rate hikes over the course of 13 years. These increases are, in part, a result of WE Energies' delays in investing in renewable energy infrastructure. While other utilities invested in solar and wind power, WE Energies has stuck with fossil fuels, only producing a small fraction of their energy using

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renewables. In 2023, only 9% of all megawatt-hours delivered to customers came from renewable energy sources. This decision has directly harmed both ratepayers and the environment.

WE Energies is claiming one of the causes of the current rate increase proposal is financing renewable energy infrastructure - something I support. However, as construction and materials costs increase, every year they delay makes the clean energy transition more expensive than it needs to be, all the while pushing Wisconsin farther away from meeting its climate and renewable energy goals. Ultimately, this means higher rates for already squeezed residential customers, while failing to do enough to avert climate catastrophe down the road.

Adding insult to injury, WE Energies' parent company, WEC Energy Group, is planning on building new natural gas infrastructure in Southeastern Wisconsin. Not only would this be tremendously expensive, in the ballpark of around \$2 billion, but it is also likely to lead to dangerous air pollution, specifically methane emissions during extraction (fracking) and transport. Instead of residential customers footing the bill for their boondoggle, WE Energies' investors should pay the price, just as any other private company would, were they not granted a state-issued monopoly.

It is unreasonable to expect ratepayers to continually accept these large increases to their utility bills; bills many already struggle to pay each month. Because of WE Energies' recent history of continued rate increases, the brunt of which have been borne by residential customers, my neighbors demand greater scrutiny before considering this or any future rate increase. Right now, the last thing that seniors and working people in my district need is higher electric bills.

Once again, I hope the PSC will do what is best for the hardworking people of Wisconsin, and deny WE Energies this rate increase.

In Service,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Chris Larson".

Chris Larson  
State Senator