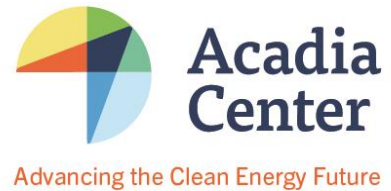


Public Comment

Public Utilities Commission hearing

August 22, 2017



Comments on Proposed Supply Rate Increase

Good morning, and thank you for the opportunity to address the Commission. My name is Erika Niedowski, and I am representing Acadia Center, a nonprofit research and advocacy organization that works to build clean, low carbon, consumer friendly economies.

National Grid's proposed 53% supply rate increase is, in a word, unfortunate. It is a burden for all ratepayers across Rhode Island, including households and businesses struggling with some of the nation's highest energy costs. It also highlights the flaws of our current energy system. Electric supply rates have gone up and down in recent years. In Rhode Island, rates have actually been lower the past few rate cycles. But we will be at the mercy of this price volatility – and burdensome rate increases – until we address our region's overreliance on natural gas.

Consumer-friendly shifts in the way we generate, deliver, and consume energy offer a cost-effective path to stabilizing energy prices regionally and meeting our climate goals in Rhode Island. We must diversify how we meet our energy needs by increasing our investment in cost-competitive renewables. These alternatives help defer expensive new infrastructure projects that drive up transmission and distribution rates – the largest- and fastest-growing component of our energy bills in the last decade.

We must also continue to invest in energy efficiency, a cost-effective economic investment that helps Rhode Island save energy, lower utility bills, cut pollution, create new jobs, and make businesses more competitive. This “least cost fuel” is the best way to protect consumers from rate shocks, yet this year, the General Assembly scooped \$12.5 million in funds collected from ratepayers for cost-effective energy efficiency programs. That is flawed, short-sighted policy. It shortchanges Rhode Island households and businesses out of opportunities to save, and to offset rate increases like the one being discussed today.

Acadia Center applauds Rhode Island for undertaking the Power Sector Transformation initiative. We must look at our energy system holistically as we undertake reforms that modernize our grid and bring the benefits of a clean, lower-cost energy system to all consumers.

Thank you again for the opportunity to address the Commission.

Contact information:

Erika Niedowski, Policy Advocate, eniedowski@acadiacenter.org, 401-276-0600

acadiacenter.org • admin@acadiacenter.org • 617.742.0054 ext. 001

Boston, MA • Hartford, CT • New York, NY • Providence, RI • Rockport, ME • Ottawa, ON, Canada