



Petition + Comments to the PUC: No Electric Rate Hike!

We demand affordable & sustainable utilities in Rhode Island

Letting decision-makers know our priorities for utility policy:

- > **No 53% electric rate hike** for a multi-national corporation (National Grid) that makes billions in profit, while thousands of Rhode Islanders are shut off from utility service due to unaffordable bills.
- > **Stop shut-offs**, make the basic need of utility service affordable to all in our state.
- > **Support PIPP** (Percentage Income Payment Plan) for low-income Rhode Islanders.
- > As we move toward renewables, implement **future utility systems that are community-based, sustainable for both people and planet.**

[With personal stories, including struggles to pay the bills, comments, research, and opinions regarding the proposed 53% electric rate hike by National Grid, what people want to see for the future of utility systems and policy in our state.]

Submitted to the RI Public Utilities Commission, Public Hearing, August 22nd, 2017, 9:30am

Signed, Town of Residence

Kevin Swift Woonsocket

Maryanne Ramirez Pawtucket

Rebecca Rushworth Woonsocket
currently shut off

Deborah Chase Warwick

Leanne Ovalles Warren

Alex Loehrer East Providence

Cathy Dean Providence

Eloise O'Shea-Wyatt Providence

"So since we live in an age where everything is electronic not having utilities is like not having food or water it is an essential to life. Those things that are essentials should never be out of anyone's reach. To make it out of reach is to put people's lives in jeopardy. No corporation's profits should be more important than human life."

Jennifer Pearce Portsmouth

Servio Gomez Providence

[Duration of shut-off] "For at least one month, and shorter durations at other times. While I was still in school, there were multiple times when the electricity would be cut off in moments when I would need to do my homework and/or study. This prolonged my stay in college way more than I would have liked. There were also times when the gas would have been shut off during the school year, making it difficult to sleep or simply be within (or outside) the house comfortably."

Dean Sudarsky Providence

Sarah Garnsey Providence

Adam Cable Pawtucket

"I am a social worker and my clients face shutoffs often. This disrupts the whole family, and especially the children, who may not have sufficient heat or light. This makes them less effective at school and more prone to mental health and behavioral issues."

Chloe Chassaing Barrington

Alex Burnett Providence

Amolia Ramdeen Pawtucket

Debbie Clark Warwick

Yvonne Bergeron Woonsocket

Samson Hampton Providence

"As a child my single mother had trouble paying our electric bill on a regular basis and every time it got shut off it was traumatizing. RI has a homelessness problem, this is just going to add to systematic oppression that is continuing to make the problem worse."

Viviana Gonzalez Cumberland

"National Grid continues to make billions in profits in a state in which they essentially monopolize. There is no justifiable reason for the 53% hike. Tens of thousands of families in this state alone struggle to pay their utilities bills, and this will only expand the difficulties to other lower income families."

Courtney Miner Cranston

Kate Schapira Providence

"Rhode Island residents need affordable electricity in the short term for our practical survival and quality of life. We also need that electricity to come from renewable sources soon, so that we're not ruining our future living conditions in order to maintain our present ones."

Rosanna Cavanaugh North Smithfield

Eric Giammarco West Warwick

Renata Robles Providence

Dena Maglione Warwick

Ciara Faccenda Providence

"I have not had my utilities shut off but I have been close. I went without certain things like food or whatever so that my son would still have heat and light and be able to bathe. He was always fed but I wasn't. I'd wear the same clothes past the time they were worn out and I often bought second hand clothes for my son. I have let neighbors use my stove or phone or spend some time with me because they couldn't afford to pay their utilities. Sometimes I didn't really know my neighbors so it was awkward but they're people who needed help."

Tracy Miller Providence

"RI needs to find a better solution than the dangerous practice of shutting off utilities."

Wendy Ancill East Providence

Peg Bugara Little Compton

Christine Rayner Providence

Kevin Descoteaux Providence

Jack Colby Warwick

Iasha Hall Providence

Ellen Goodman East Providence

Michelle Micheo Providence

[Duration of shut-off] "2 months. It affected me a lot because I had to split up my children because I couldn't afford to turn it back on and everything ran electricity in the house."

S _____ East Providence

"I am a single mother of two girls. I was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 2011. It has been a struggle for me to work since then. I was out of work more than in. I also have other illnesses I deal with. Paying rent is my number one priority so my children have a roof over their head. I did have medical protection on my account with national grid but still, they don't care. In December of 2016, my doctors took me out of work permanently. The money I get from TDI while awaiting SSDI is not enough to cover anything. I did sign up for the AMP program but still I do not make enough to cover my utilities. National Grid asks for way too much for down payments. Electricity and gas is a necessity not a luxury. The people they have working for them and the way they speak to you and threaten to shut you off is awful...especially when you already feel horrible about not being able to afford to pay. Something needs to be done about the greediness of this company. Rhode Islanders are tired of it. Please keep this anonymous. Thank you."

Emidio Rosa Woonsocket

"I work for Community Care Alliance and I see very agonizing families dealing with utilities shutoffs."

Maria Rodriguez Pawtucket

"If electric is more and more expensive no one will afford."

Janet Isserlis Providence

James Marchand Woonsocket

[Have been shut off before] "A long time and it was so difficult due to my illnesses. I am disabled and I am a single parent...it is so hard to manage on a single income and social security at that. I don't think it is right for the amount they charge. I noticed that the delivery charges are more than the usage??? What's with that?"

Kate Josephson Providence

Erik VanHise

Woonsocket

"I had my electric turned off because I couldn't pay the bill. I'm on disability I couldn't shower cook or ice my injuries after surgery. When I first got injured I went through trying to get disability for over a year I had no money to pay my bills. The electric company told me to send doctors papers to them. They said they never received them. This went on for almost a year. Then they told me I had to go to a hearing I went and they tried to make me pay a down payment that I couldn't afford. I showed doctor papers and documents to show I couldn't work. The people at the hearing didn't care they wanted their down payment. I couldn't come up with the money and they shut me off. Thank God I started receiving my disability after a year and a half. To this day I still send them all the documents disability has sent me. They still claim they don't receive them. Everyone one else I send them to they get them, I really think the electric company don't care about people. They care about making people pay that can't and they harass me. Threats that if I don't come up with money they will turn me off knowing I'm on disability. I think every American citizen should have affordable electricity and heat. I've worked my whole life and when I get hurt big companies like National Grid turn their backs on me and want more than I can afford. I feel they should have other electric companies to help keep cost down. National Grid is the only electric company and they know they can treat people bad because you need their service. Not fair to the people struggling."

Gail Faris

West Kingston

"I have not had any personal struggles, but it is incomprehensible to me what an over fifty percent hike would mean for many, especially those of low-income."

Susan O'Connell

Providence

Harvey Thaler

Westerly

Fellela Deborah

Johnston

Catherine Collette

Charlestown

Kevin Ryan

Narragansett

Holly Snyder Providence

"I have not had my utilities shut off for lack of payment, but had them shut off because an upstairs neighbor had repeated problems with paying his bills. In that case, even though I had fully paid my bills, I suffered several days without power even after contacting both the utility company and the PUC. This should never happen to anyone! Ordinary people need advocates."

Amy Miao Providence

Stephen Martin Cranston

[Duration of shut-off] "6 months during the winter. Every person should be allocated a small amount of electricity for free with a sliding scale after that let the biggest residential users pay the most ... adjusted of course for those who heat with electricity."

Celeste Jeffrey Providence

[Duration of shut-off] "Approximately 2 months. We had to stay with relatives. Our family income has always been moderate. Being employed full time with a decent wage I still struggle to keep up with basic needs and housing. Utility bills as a priority usually left me to make a decision about reducing or changing supports to other needs like food and gas for the car. Raising two children and caring for two elderly parents became a real struggle when their utilities were in jeopardy as well. We made the choice to pay my parents' bills and take the disconnect for my home. We stayed with them until I was able to have service reinstated."

Gerry Willis Middletown

Christine Torres Pawtucket

"I am having trouble with the current rates because I have Cancer and cannot afford it, having a hike in rates will bring me over the edge."

Sylvia Ann Soares Providence

Jeannine Casselman Warren

Fr. William Nunez Slatersville

[Duration of shut-off] *"Almost a month, devastating"*

Albert Mucci Lincoln

[Duration of shut-off] *"7 Weeks - had to leave home. Electric shut off IN ERROR took 7 weeks and a lawyer to get it turned back on."*

Margo Murphy Providence

Joyce Rongo Barrington

Natalia Bonella Pawtucket

Nancy Paradee Cumberland

Jason Ballou West Greenwich

Stump Evans Hope

Nicole Minior Warwick

Martha Cumpido Pawtucket

Jacqueline Corriveau Woonsocket

"I struggle to pay my electric bill every month because I am on a fixed income. If I didn't need food with this I would be ok. If it goes up I may not be able to cope with it."

T _____ Woonsocket

[Duration of shut-off] *"3 days, it was very difficult to prepare meals, and have children do homework. It is difficult living week to week as it is and struggling to pay the current utility rate. This amount is a very large increase and may make things even more difficult. Please remain anonymous."*

Holly Cartier Woonsocket

Robyn Federici Cumberland

"I work for a non-profit organization. Which means my salary is very low. I live on the 3rd floor in Cumberland. I heat with electric. My highest electric bill was \$300 a month during the winter. In the summer, it is \$250. I have lived at this address for 3yrs and manage to pay the bill every month. I had to take a pay cut with my job and I know this winter I will be in danger of having it shut off. I began telling this story by saying I work in a Non-Profit because I wanted to continue helping out the less fortunate but I am not sure if I can do that with an electric increase."

Colleen Joubert Pascoag

"This rate hike seems suspiciously timed considering the current conversation regarding the need for the Invenergy Power Plant proposed for northern Rhode Island. Is this a rate hike to make a point? And, meanwhile people who are the most vulnerable suffer the most. Corporations have to be more accountable to their customers and less concerned with profiting their shareholders."

Jacqui Arpin North Smithfield

"BF died and now on own to pay all bills."

Querino Montrond East Providence

"National Grid cares nothing for the people. The excuse is RI lets them do whatever they want."

Arlene Delgado Woonsocket

[Duration of shut-off] "about a month. It dramatically affected my day to day life as a single mother and living paycheck to paycheck I've had to make miracles happen in order to maintain a good quality of life for my children whom are my priority. Dramatic rate hikes such as this should never be allowed. Many low income families are already suffering to make ends meet and this proposed rate hike will certainly hurt many, many families."

Briana Gagnon Woonsocket

Keith Cooper Providence

Barbara Inderlin Cranston

"I wish I could get a 53% Social Security raise. There hasn't been any kind of a raise in over 2 years. I cannot afford this absurd increase or any increase for that matter (as is true of many, many people). Electricity is already too expensive. I would have to make choices whether to buy medication (I'm currently being treated for cancer) or food if such an absurd increase is approved!!!! I think we need more competition among utility providers in RI and make National Grid compete. Most of us would drop them for another choice. 53% - how can this happen and how do they expect that people will be able to afford that increase. I'm appalled, discouraged and fearful regarding this proposed increase. I wish I could be making 1% of the profit National Grid receives... PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE DON'T LET THIS HAPPEN!!!!!"

Karen Ciummo Mapleville

Amy Murphy North Providence

"My family and I struggle every month, if it wasn't for a budget we would never be able to afford the bill and then the budget goes up and it is constant readjusting our budget."

Nick Figueroa Providence

[Duration of shut-off] "A couple of weeks and it was awful."

Lori-Anne Wunschel Pawtucket

"have missed other payments to pay the utility bills"

Suzanne Doucette Bellingham, MA

Margaux Morisseau Scituate

Jeremy Benson Providence

Albert Erminelli Woonsocket

[Duration of shut-off] "No fridge lost everything. It was not good I felt so awful, lost a lot."

Sheri Pimentel Coventry

Lynn Finocchiaro North Kingstown

[Duration of shut-off] *"short time but it made life difficult. I work in a hospital with clients who frequently get shut off. I am a social worker in a hospital. I work with pregnant women. I often learn that their utilities are shut off and they have no way to cook, no heat, etc..."*

Mary Cruz Central Falls

[Duration of shut-off] *"3 months"*

Kevin Ryan Narragansett

Linda Majewski Woonsocket

"Many in Woonsocket are low income due to disability or being seniors with little income. Many in our state have a hard time finding good paying jobs. Even for those with adequate incomes the rate of pay increases does not keep up with the rate of increased expenses."

Jennifer Bolduc Slatersville

"I work in a field where many of my clients cannot afford their utility bill as it currently is. If there is a substantial rate increase it will be catastrophic for many low income households. Since most Rhode Islanders cannot decide to go with another company for electric it will be a hopeless increase of household who have no access to utilities. Many people are just scraping by or in debt already this will double if not triple the number of Rhode Islanders who cannot afford electric. This service is a basic necessity and needs to be affordable to everyone."

Willia Truelove Providence

[Duration of shut-off] *"It did affect my day to day life and it was months."*

Alice Gross Kingston

Patrick Pride Woonsocket

Lindsay Paiva Coventry

Paula McFarland Cranston

Judy Whitehead Bellingham, MA

"I live in Mass but work in RI where most of my family resides. Were this to happen in MA I would not be able to afford such a drastic rate increase. I also work with people who are on disability, have very low income, are homeless or at risk for homelessness. These people struggle every day to maintain their utilities, an increase would be unmanageable. It's all over the news that although the economy is improving, wages have not increased for the majority of people. It is incomprehensible that there is a proposal for a 53% rate increase. This cannot happen."

Carol Scotto Brotman North Kingstown

"GW Center's been advocating for this too many yrs. It's time our leaders take care of those with greatest need."

Bernice Lott Kingston

Martin Lepkowski Wakefield

Laura Brion Providence

Suzanne Pezzulli Riverside

Darlene Magaw Pascoag

"Our agency does serve many NG customers and their families who do experience the trauma of shut-offs."

Pam Jennings Providence

"I work with thousands of Rhode Islanders who struggle to afford the basic necessities like food, shelter, heat and electricity. It is incredibly unfair that everyone has to pay the same rate for energy regardless of their income. Evidence of this are the thousands of RI who are shut-off each year for the simple fact that they can't make ends meet. Preventing a rate hike and ultimately implementing PIPP are common-sense ways to make this system more fair."

Daisy Bassen East Greenwich

Eliza Cohen Providence

"PIPP for all! Utilities are a basic right not just for those who rely on refrigerated medicine or electrical health devices but anyone who wants to read after dark, cook a hot meal on the stove, or keep milk cold."

Maria Bergman Warwick

Clifford Bergman Warwick

Robyn Borges Jamestown

Anne Wilcox Cumberland

"I'm a handicapped widow with a daughter. On limited budget."

Hieyoon Kim Providence

Carmel Lomardi Providence

Brenda Plourde Chepachet

"I just know it's hard to pay and keep electric with prices now let alone if the hike prices even higher, I am Disabled and struggle monthly as it is. I think it's unfair the way the country is to start hiking prices the poor always suffer the most."

Gwendolyn Buckley Andrade Providence

Mary Hartley Cranston

"I make due with a moderate income. I don't want to pay more for electricity because of a greedy rate increase. I pay my bill on time and I do my best to save energy. Shake down the rich if you want more money - or learn to do with less like I did."

Sal Caiozzo West Greenwich

Janet Davies Cranston

Anna Snyder Providence

Greg Pallante Cranston

Judy Ellinwood Cranston

Daniel Martens Pawtucket

Charles Feldman Providence

Jessica Avizinis Charlestown

R_____ Providence

[Duration of shut-off] *"Since May 2017- Aug. 2017 –Present. (Anonymous) I am 28 years old young man who is disabled and living with schizophrenia. I have been on Social Security and I tried to work as \$ 700 per month could not pay rent and pay utilities as well as buy food and take myself to work. I ended up with a gas and electric over \$5000 which I cannot pay. National Grid is unconscionable. They don't care about people suffering as long as they get a large profit. If I cannot pay \$5000 how am going to pay the rate hike. ? I am in fear of Winter coming with no heat. I have no way out of this situation. National Grid does not need a hike when poor and disabled individuals like myself are left to burn or freeze to death."*

Victoria Neville Tiverton

"I make \$800 a month on disability and if you double my electricity I will not be able to afford it.. I have worked hard my whole life and have only recently become disabled and it is heart-wrenching to count on the government to help me.. you have to consider the low income and how people only have so much money to live.."

Jesse Souza Providence

[Duration of shut-off] *"A few weeks; everyday living was difficult. I struggle to pay the bills EVERY MONTH. The rates on utilities are astronomical, it's hard enough trying to survive on one job w/what landlords charge for rent!"*

Alli Brady Little Compton

"We recently used part of our retirement savings to purchase solar panels. Our electric bill is our single, largest bill. Before this hike it was commonly over \$400. A month and we were always struggling to pay it. Almost monthly we received a warning letter regarding service termination and somehow managed to pay it. It is absolutely criminal that national grid wants to increase by 53%! Electricity will become unaffordable for many Rhode Islanders. This has to be stopped!!"

Jen Corace Providence

Dana O'Neill Cranston

"My apt is heated by electricity, and over the past 6 yrs there has already been a 50% increase that I can barely afford. I have my own business and I support myself and this seems incredibly unfair."

Jenni Pearce Portsmouth

Florence Swanson Providence

Brenna Okeefe West Warwick

Katherine WestWarwick

Mikaila Arthur Providence

Erica Mena-Landry Providence

BenTyler Providence

Mary-lyn Siderski West Warwick

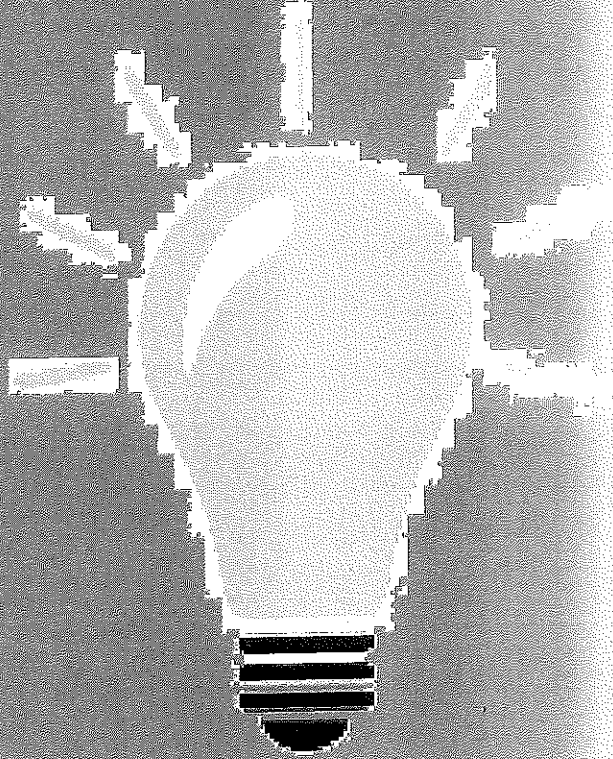
Anthony Taveras Pawtucket

[Duration of shut-off] "3 months. I caught pneumonia."

Petition-Survey Statistics

- Over 140 responses from across the state of Rhode Island
- No Electric Rate Hike: Agree- 100%
- Experienced shut-off firsthand: Yes- 25%; No- 70%; Other- 5%
- Previously aware of Shut-off Crisis in Rhode Island: No- 40%; Yes- 23%; Somewhat, but did not know the extent- 37%
- Do you think utility access is a basic need: Yes- 100%
- Do you support PIPP (Percentage Income Payment Plan): Yes- 82%; Need more info- 17%; Other- 1%

STOP THE SHUT-OFF CRISIS in Rhode Island



- > In 2016 over 27,000 shut-offs imposed (electric + gas)
- > Shocking numbers for a state of 1 million
- > And National Grid made over \$ 4 billion profit that year

Affordable Utility Access is a BASIC NEED

Stop Shut-offs \Leftrightarrow Support PIPP

(Percentage Income Payment Plan)

organize together : georgewileycenter.org

Shut-offs in 2016, Rhode Island

Electric, physical shut-offs: 18,551

Gas, physical shut-offs: 8,518

Total gas + electric shut-offs: 27,069

In 2016 over 27,000 shut-offs imposed

Shocking numbers for a state of 1 million

And National Grid made over \$ 4 billion profit that year



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