

EXH. JAD-13
DOCKETS UE-240006 & UG-240007
WITNESS: JIM A. DENNISON

CROSS-ANSWERING TESTIMONY OF JIM A.
DENNISON ON BEHALF OF SIERRA CLUB

EXH. JAD-13
SIERRA CLUB ET AL. LETTER TO DENNIS
VERMILLION

October 3, 2023

Dennis Vermillion
President & CEO
Avista Energy Corporation

Dear Dennis Vermillion,

The undersigned environmental and social justice organizations are writing to you to request that Avista withdraw its membership from the American Gas Association (AGA). We recently [learned that Eversource Energy, an investor-owned utility that sells both electricity and gas in the Northeast, has decided to end its membership with the American Gas Association](#), in order to “redirect costs to more targeted associations and memberships with a focus on decarbonization.”

As you know, [AGA has become a significant barrier to climate action](#). This is especially true as it relates to eliminating emissions from the building sector, and Eversource’s decision recognizes the misalignment between their own commitment to decarbonization and how AGA uses its membership dues to fight climate policies across the nation.

We’re grateful for Avista’s partnership on many decarbonization efforts in the Pacific Northwest. Avista’s willingness to come to the table with a range of parties in rate case settlements reached in both Oregon and Washington are steps in the right direction to addressing the climate crisis. Specifically, [the recent settlement agreement](#) that Avista reached with intervenors in its general rate case disallowed the use of \$90,000 in ratepayer dollars for membership costs to associations including the American Gas Association and the NW Gas Association.

Clearly, the actions of the American Gas Association do not align with values of Avista or its customers. AGA has been instrumental in undermining climate policy at the local, state and federal level. [AGA uses its members’ dues](#) to spread misleading information, and fights efficiency standards that will help save Americans money and cut pollution. They have [led an effort](#) to ban local governments in dozens of states from utilizing their authority to increase energy efficiency and upgrade buildings to cut pollution and ensure residents can withstand the impacts of climate change. And - much like the tobacco industry - they’ve done considerable harm by [hiring mercenary toxicologists in an attempt to cast doubt about the science around the health harms from burning gas indoors](#).

By continuing to spend funds supporting an organization that is fighting the very objectives and policies that Avista and your customers support, the utility is effectively undermining its own goals as well as the goals of its customers and supporting a toxic brand of climate denial. It is difficult to see how Avista can continue to meet its own commitments and live up to its values while financially contributing to the harmful actions of this trade association. How can you engage in good faith with your investors, customers and policymakers as you actively seek out climate solutions, while also propping up a key barrier to those solutions?

Eversource is offering a clear example that a major gas service provider can continue to safely and responsibly provide its operations without supporting the climate obstruction carried out by the American Gas Association. By shifting support to more aligned trade associations - as Eversource is doing - Avista can simultaneously provide safe energy service to its customers without undermining its own commitment to a healthier future.

The undersigned organizations strongly urge Avista to leave the American Gas Association. Just as utilities abandoned the American Coalition for Clean Coal over the association's efforts to mislead the public over coal policy, so too must utilities now stand up to AGA's actions to stall the transition to clean electricity. Leaving AGA would not only ensure its ratepayer dollars are not being misused, it would send a strong signal to other utilities that the era of climate obstruction must end, as we all partner to help safeguard Americans from the devastating impacts of climate change.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jess Grady-Benson, Organizing Director, Rogue Climate

Lauren McCloy, Policy Director, NW Energy Coalition

Bob Jenks, Executive Director, Oregon Citizens' Utility Board

James Moschella, Climate and Health Program Manager, Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility

Kelly Hall, Washington State Director, Climate Solutions

David De La Torre, Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility

Jan Hasselman, Senior Attorney, Earthjustice

Dylan Plummer, Senior Field Organizer, Sierra Club

Diane Hodiak, Executive Director, 350 Deschutes

Lenny Dee, Volunteer, Onward Oregon

Danny Noonan, Climate and Energy Strategist, Breach Collective

Sue Craig, Interfaith Earthkeepers Eugene/Springfield Oregon

David Delk, Oregon UU Voices for Justice

Brian Stewart, Co-Founder, Electrify Now

Robin B Crowder, Co-Director, 21 Acres Center for Local Food & Sustainable Living

Patricia Hine, President, 350 Eugene

Karen Harrington, Climate Reality Project, Portland Chapter, Chair Legislative Committee