

Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission
Via email comments@utc.wa.gov and utility@atg.wa.gov

Dear Commissioners,

On behalf of the Building Industry Association of Whatcom County representing 390 members with over 7,000 employees in the homebuilding industry, I am writing to express significant concerns regarding Puget Sound Energy's (PSE) proposed electric and natural gas rate increases for years 2025 and 2026 (Dockets UE-240004, UG-240005, and UE-230810).

The proposed increases would result in an average cost of \$19.04 per month (\$228.48 annually) for residential electric customers and \$15.47 per month (\$185.64 annually) for natural gas customers. While seemingly minor, these figures represent a significant financial strain for many households grappling with rising living costs.

Our community's financial hardships are evident. For example, [23%](#) of middle-income earners are cost-burdened by rent, and [73%](#) of Washington families cannot afford to buy any home. Further, many families are already forced to choose between basic necessities, such as heating their homes or buying groceries. Imposing further financial strain on a rate base where [64%](#) of customers are already struggling to pay their utility bills is unacceptable.

While PSE cites increased operating costs as justification for the rate adjustments, this explanation falls short. Every business faces inflationary pressures, yet competitive markets do not permit unchecked price hikes. PSE's status as a regulated monopoly should come with a heightened sense of responsibility, not the ability to pass poorly planned financial burdens onto consumers without accountability.

I strongly urge the Commission to consider the requested increases' real-life impact on struggling Washingtonians and reject PSE's proposed rate adjustments for 2025 and 2026. Instead, I encourage the Commission to explore alternative paths that ensure PSE can maintain its operations without harming Washington families and businesses.

Thank you for your consideration; BIAW trusts the Commission will prioritize the financial well-being of Washingtonians over the financial interests of PSE's shareholders.

Sincerely,

Robert E Lee
Executive Officer: BIAWC
Building Industry Association of Whatcom County