

**WUTC v. Puget Sound Energy / In the Matter of the  
Petition of Puget Sound Energy**

**Docket No. UE-220066, UG-220067, UG-210918 - Vol. VII**

**February 8, 2024**



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BEFORE THE WASHINGTON  
UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

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WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND	)	
TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION,	)	
	)	
Complainant,	)	DOCKETS UE-220066
	)	UG-220067
vs.	)	UG-210918
	)	(Consolidated)
PUGET SOUND ENERGY,	)	
	)	
Respondent.	)	PAGES 414 - 458
	)	

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PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING - VOLUME VII

February 8, 2024

CHAIR DAVID DANNER PRESIDING

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REPORTED BY: ELIZABETH PATTERSON HARVEY, RPR, CCR 2731

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A P P E A R A N C E S

FOR THE COMMISSION:

Commission Chair David W. Danner  
Commissioner Milt Doumit  
Commissioner Ann Rendahl

FOR PUBLIC COUNSEL:

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ALSO PRESENT:

Corey Dahl - Office of Public Counsel  
Andrew Roberts - Commission Staff

I N D E X

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1 February 8, 2024 - 6:00 p.m.

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3

4 CHAIR DANNER: All right. The recording has  
5 started. So good evening, everyone. Today is February  
6 8, 2014, and this is a public comment hearing of the  
7 Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission in  
8 Docket UE 220066, consolidated with Dockets UG 220067 and  
9 UG 210918.

10 I'm Dave Danner. I'm chair of the  
11 commission. And I'm joined by my colleagues,  
12 Commissioner Ann Rendahl and Commissioner Milt Doumit.

13 Tonight we are taking public comment on a  
14 petition by Puget Sound Energy that was filed in August  
15 2023 to amend the final order in this docket to change  
16 its credit and collection practices.

17 By way of background, the commission, in  
18 August 2022, approved a settlement of portions of Puget  
19 Sound Energy's last general rate case. And in that  
20 settlement, the company agreed to continue its existing  
21 credit and collection processes until the conclusion of a  
22 separate proceeding now being conducted in Docket  
23 U-210800.

24 That docket is considering possible changes  
25 to the utility disconnections credit and collection

1 practices. The docket was opened in October of 2021, and  
2 at this time, in 2014, the docket is still -- is still  
3 open and is not yet concluded.

4 In the petition, the company has noted that  
5 its arrearages; that is, the money the company is owed,  
6 but has not be able to collect from customers, has  
7 continued to grow in the aftermath of the pandemic, and  
8 the rulemaking proceeding addressing collection practices  
9 is not yet nearing completion.

10 Other parties in this proceeding, including  
11 the commission staff; The Energy Project; the Office of  
12 Public Counsel and the Office of the Attorney General;  
13 and the joint environmental advocates, comprised of the  
14 Northwest Energy Coalition, Front and Centered, and the  
15 Sierra Club, all opposed this petition to amend the  
16 settlement.

17 The commission held an evidentiary hearing in  
18 this matter on January 18, 2014.

19 And tonight we want to hear from members of  
20 the public. Your comments will be made part of the  
21 record in this proceeding and will be considered along  
22 with the testimony and exhibits in this case. Be aware  
23 that this is an opportunity for you to provide comment to  
24 the commission, but be aware that the commissioners will  
25 not engage commenters in debate or discussion or

1 answering any questions that you put to us.

2 The Office of the Public Counsel in the  
3 attorney general's office represents the interests of the  
4 public in proceedings before the Utilities and  
5 Transportation Commission.

6 And Tad O'Neill and Corey Dahl of the Office  
7 of Public Counsel, I believe are in attendance tonight.  
8 Can I ask public counsel to come forward and share some  
9 contact information if commenters have questions?

10 ATTORNEY O'NEILL: Yes, your Honor. If you  
11 can hear me, this is Tad Robinson O'Neill. I'm senior  
12 counsel with the attorney general's office.

13 CHAIR DANNER: Good evening. Thanks for being  
14 here. Can you share your contact information if  
15 commenters have questions?

16 ATTORNEY O'NEILL: If commenters want to  
17 submit written comments rather than oral comments today,  
18 they can E-mail the public counsel at utility. -- or --  
19 I'm sorry. Utility@atg.wa.gov. Utility@atg.wa.gov.

20 CHAIR DANNER: All right. Thank you very  
21 much.

22 And I'm now going to turn the microphone over  
23 to Andrew Roberts of commission staff to set some ground  
24 rules going forward.

25 And thanks to everyone in attendance tonight

1 for taking time to be with us and share your views with  
2 us.

3 So Andrew Roberts, can I turn it over to  
4 you?

5 ANDREW ROBERTS: Yeah. Good evening. My  
6 name is Andrew Roberts. I'm a regulatory analyst with  
7 commission staff.

8 I'd like to cover some ground rules for the  
9 comment hearing this evening. I'd like to ask everyone  
10 to please mute their connection unless they're called on  
11 to speak.

12 If you're participating via the Zoom  
13 application, you can mute by clicking the microphone  
14 icon. A slash will appear across the microphone to  
15 indicate you have muted the connection. To unmute, just  
16 click the microphone again, and the slash will disappear.

17 If you called in on the phone, press Star 6  
18 to mute yourself. When you're called on to speak, press  
19 Star 4 to unmute yourself, and Star 6 will again mute  
20 your connection.

21 Please wait to be called on for comment, and  
22 do not interrupt other speakers.

23 There are two options to report technical  
24 difficulties. The first is to use the Zoom feature, and  
25 the second is to call Ryan Smith at 360-664-1165.

1           The chat feature should only be used to  
2 report technical difficulties and ask to be added to the  
3 sign-in sheet. We will not be accepting comments via the  
4 Zoom chat feature. Please do not use the chat feature to  
5 provide your comment.

6           I heard somebody? Okay.

7           Closed captioning is available via the  
8 toolbar at the bottom of the Zoom application.

9           Each speaker will be given two minutes to  
10 provide their comment. As you speak, we'll display a  
11 timer with your remaining time.

12           If you have questions about the case, please  
13 e-mail comments at UTC@wa.gov or call 888-333-9882.

14           If you haven't provided your name yet and  
15 wish to speak, please put your first and last name in the  
16 chat if you're using the Zoom application.

17           If you're calling, please press Star 9 to  
18 raise your hand. And we'll call on you to get your name  
19 added to the sign-in sheet.

20           CHAIR DANNER: All right, Andrew. Are you  
21 done?

22           ANDREW ROBERTS: I believe so. I'm not  
23 seeing any --

24           COMMISSIONER RENDAHL: There is someone who's  
25 raised --

1           ANDREW ROBERTS: -- additional names in chat.

2           COMMISSIONER RENDAHL: There is someone who's  
3 raised their hand that's calling in.

4           ANDREW ROBERTS: It says Call-in User 1 on my  
5 screen?

6           COMMISSIONER RENDAHL: Yes.

7           ANDREW ROBERTS: If you raised your hand to  
8 provide your name, you can please unmute by pressing Star  
9 6, and we'll go ahead and get you added to the sign-in  
10 sheet. Again, you can unmute by pressing Star 6. I see  
11 you just unmuted. Go ahead.

12           SUSAN STEVENS: I'm supposed to give you  
13 information for a sign-in sheet? I haven't done this  
14 before. Is that what we're doing, signing in right  
15 now?

16           ANDREW ROBERTS: Correct. Can I get your  
17 first and last name, please.

18           SUSAN STEVENS: Yeah. Susan Stevens.

19           ANDREW ROBERTS: All right, Susan. Thank you  
20 very much.

21           SUSAN STEVENS: Do I have to unmute again?

22           ANDREW ROBERTS: Yes. When you're called on  
23 to speak, you have to unmute yourself. If you could  
24 press Star 6 again to mute yourself, we'll get started.

25           SUSAN STEVENS: All right.

1 KATHERYN ORLOWSKI: Can you hear me?

2 ANDREW ROBERTS: Yes, I can hear somebody.

3 KATHERYN ORLOWSKI: This is Katheryn  
4 Orłowski, and I'd like to sign up.

5 ANDREW ROBERTS: Okay. Thank you very much.  
6 I have your name.

7 CHAIR DANNER: All right --

8 ANDREW ROBERTS: So with that -- go ahead.

9 CHAIR DANNER: With that, I think we're going  
10 to get going. And we will make sure we will get  
11 everybody tonight.

12 So let's get started. And we'll start with  
13 Leah Thomason. Are you there?

14 CHAIR DANNER: Debra Thomason?

15 All right. Dave Parejo, are you there?

16 Dalan Lynette?

17 Bill Cummins, are you there?

18 Bruce Wilkinson?

19 Pam Barstow? Pam Barstow, are you there?

20 COMMISSIONER RENDAHL: You may need to press  
21 Star 6 to unmute yourself.

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Well, there seems to  
23 be about 42 individuals within the meeting, and we've got  
24 about five people running the show. Would it be simpler  
25 if the people that wanted to speak jump in versus the

1 list?

2 CHAIR DANNER: Well, let me keep going down  
3 the list. And we will come back to the names that I have  
4 not gotten responses to.

5 Brett Williams, are you there?

6 All right. Gary Butterfield?

7 And Rose Ferguson?

8 Okay. That was our early sign-in sheet.

9 So now let's -- we have some folks who have  
10 signed in just tonight. Morgan Taylor, are you there?

11 MORGAN TAYLOR: I am here.

12 CHAIR DANNER: Oh, good. Would you like to  
13 share your thoughts us tonight?

14 MORGAN TAYLOR: If at all possible, could you  
15 swing back and get me after I hear a couple of other  
16 people speak?

17 CHAIR DANNER: We can do that. Thank you.

18 Gayle Donohue, are you there?

19 GAYLE DONOHUE: Are you there? There. Can  
20 you hear me now?

21 CHAIR DANNER: Yes. Is this Gayle Donohue?

22 GAYLE DONOHUE: Yes, it is.

23 CHAIR DANNER: Okay. Go ahead. Thank you.

24 GAYLE DONOHUE: So it's my understanding  
25 that the reason that we are coming together today is to

1 discuss rates and rate increases. Is that true?

2 CHAIR DANNER: Well, so this is a petition to  
3 amend a settlement in a general rate case. So yes,  
4 intellectually, it is the case.

5 GAYLE DONOHUE: Okay. That's all the  
6 clarification I needed for the moment.

7 CHAIR DANNER: Okay. Do you have comments  
8 you'd like to make tonight?

9 GAYLE DONOHUE: Not at the moment. I don't  
10 really know enough about it yet to comment fully here.

11 CHAIR DANNER: All right. We will move on,  
12 then.

13 Scarlett Caldwell, are you there?

14

15 COMMENTS BY SCARLETT CALDWELL

16 SCARLETT CALDWELL: So I should start off by  
17 saying that I am an HOA president. I do a lot of  
18 philanthropy within the community. I volunteer at the  
19 Humane Society, and I am an advocate for a lot of  
20 individuals within this region.

21 I understand that giving people kindness and  
22 a break during COVID and tough times is important. But I  
23 nor most of the people that I collaborate with are  
24 socialists. And they do not want their money to be  
25 paying for other people that worked less hard or are not

1 their own families and their own friends, and they  
2 actively have communicated that times are tough for all  
3 of us. Inflation has hit us all. Jobs aren't paying  
4 what they used to, and prices are increasing.

5 That being said, a lot of people, myself  
6 included, do not feel like we deserve an increase in our  
7 PSE bill, which has historically been going up the last  
8 couple years regardless, and we just got a notice that  
9 something had gone up because of the Green Initiative, so  
10 we're still paying more.

11 Yeah, the overwhelming, you know, concern  
12 that I hear from people is it's too high, and I'm paying  
13 other people's bills. And I work hard for the things  
14 that I do, and I want my money to go to my family and my  
15 friends. And I don't have enough to go around,  
16 unfortunately. They need to work hard for their family  
17 and their friends, and they need to pay their bills.

18 And I don't think it's fair for us to have  
19 these huge increases because other people didn't pay  
20 their bills or they needed a couple months' break. You  
21 know, I understand that, but if the company decides to  
22 give people a break and not have them pay their bills,  
23 that's the company's perspective. I didn't make that  
24 decision for those individuals, and I didn't give them a  
25 break on their bill.

1           That being said, I think the company needs to  
2 either do collections protocols and take those people to  
3 court and do, you know, small claims court if they need  
4 to, and go after the money that was owed to them for  
5 services rendered; not do the services to those people,  
6 and/or they need to figure out how to figure it out on  
7 their own without charging other people to pay bills for  
8 people that they weren't themselves.

9           CHAIR DANNER: All right. Thank you very  
10 much for your comments.

11           SCARLETT CALDWELL: (Inaudible) -- a few  
12 minutes, Dave.

13           CHAIR DANNER: What's that? I'm sorry?

14           SCARLETT CALDWELL: I saw the clock. I  
15 thought I would be respectful and not go over.

16           CHAIR DANNER: Thank you so much. I  
17 appreciate it. And thank you for your comments.

18           Kathleen Saul, are you there?

19           KATHLEEN SAUL: Yes, I am. I'm right here.

20           CHAIR DANNER: Okay. And share your  
21 thoughts with us tonight.

22

23                           COMMENTS BY KATHLEEN SAUL

24           KATHLEEN SAUL: Thank you, members of the  
25 commission, for allowing me to speak. My name is

1 Kathleen Saul, and I have an Ph.D. in energy and  
2 environmental policy.

3 I do want to acknowledge Puget Sound Energy's  
4 willingness to work with low income and vulnerable  
5 populations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

6 However, I argue now is not the time to  
7 return to past practices and restart disconnections or  
8 penalize further those in arrears.

9 According to the Low Income Home Energy  
10 Assistance Program Clearinghouse, Washington state will  
11 receive \$59.4 million in support for 2024. That's down  
12 20 percent from the 74.6 million allocated in 2023. And  
13 that means fewer customers will receive assistance.

14 At the same time, the National Energy  
15 Assistance Director's Association reports that the number  
16 of people behind on their electric bills and the amount  
17 owed have reached record highs. Across the country, 21.2  
18 million households, more than one in six American  
19 households, owed money on their electric bills in  
20 December of 2023, up from 20.1 million a year earlier.

21 Indeed, one of my close friends who is fully  
22 employed has admitted this week he's turned off the heat  
23 in his house this winter because he can't afford to pay  
24 his bills. He wears socks and his coat around the house  
25 and sleeps with his dog to keep warm.

1 PSE's concern is making the numbers add up to  
2 a desired rate of return, not my friend or an aging  
3 parent who's desperate to stay in their own home, but  
4 whose dementia prevents them from realizing that their  
5 power is about to get turned off for lack of payment.

6 Now is not the time to bring back electric  
7 service disruptions. It is the time to remind everyone  
8 that those who are behind on their bills are not just  
9 numbers; they're mothers and fathers, aunts and uncles,  
10 grandparents and friends who deserve to be treated with  
11 dignity and respect. Thank you.

12 CHAIR DANNER: Thank you very much.  
13 Appreciate that. Bonnie Ficklan, are you there?

14 BONNIE FICKLAN: I am.

15 CHAIR DANNER: So go ahead.

16

17 COMMENTS BY BONNIE FICKLAN

18 BONNIE FICKLAN: Well, I'm a senior citizen.  
19 And my husband and I have worked all of our lives to have  
20 a good retirement. However, because our utility bills  
21 continue to rise, all the time, I keep my heat turned  
22 down very low. I wear a jacket in my house every day and  
23 try and you know, conserve.

24 We have a lot of bills to pay. We're always  
25 on time paying our bills, including all of our utility

1 bills. And we paid our bills all during the COVID  
2 pandemic and since, and yet our bills keep going up and  
3 up and up, but our income does not. We're on a fixed  
4 income.

5           And I just -- you know, I get tired. I agree  
6 with the first speaker that was talking about the fact  
7 that there's no compensation to us. We pay our bills on  
8 time. I've always been very conscientious of doing that,  
9 even when the income doesn't rise. I make certain that  
10 my bills are paid. And I make do with what I have, even  
11 if it's, you know, being cold or having our heat turned  
12 down. I turn it down at night.

13           But I don't feel that it's the right time  
14 to shut off people's heat, and yet I don't feel that I  
15 should have to pay for someone else who isn't mindful of  
16 paying their bills, who depends on the utility companies  
17 or someone else to pay their bills for them.

18           We're not low enough income to have someone  
19 pay ours, and I wouldn't want to accept that from someone  
20 else anyway. I'm very self sufficient and want to take  
21 care of my own bills. And I think that more people need  
22 to be doing that as well, instead of depending on someone  
23 else to pay them for them.

24           That's why Puget Sound Energy has gotten  
25 themselves into this. They're constantly sending in the

1 mail how to get out of paying your bills. Every single  
2 month we get --

3 CHAIR DANNER: All right. Thank you very  
4 much for your comments.

5 Pam Barstow, are you there? Pam Barstow?

6 Susan Stevens, are you there?

7 SUSAN STEVENS: Okay. I'm here.

8 CHAIR DANNER: Thank you.

9 SUSAN STEVENS: I just said -- this is --

10 (Overlapping speech)

11 BONNIE FICKLAN: I'll step out.

12 CHAIR DANNER: I'm sorry? Okay.

13 So Susan Stevens, why don't you go ahead.

14

15 COMMENTS BY SUSAN STEVENS

16 SUSAN STEVENS: Yes. I actually pulled off  
17 this form about calling in and participating. And I  
18 wasn't quite sure what all the issues was on this because  
19 I tore off the other information.

20 But I agree with the other callers, that  
21 we're -- both my husband and I are retired now, and we  
22 see these utility rates going up and up and up. And even  
23 if you conserve -- they talk about all these ways to  
24 conserve energy, and even if you did those things, which  
25 we do, and the usage and the delivery charges are down,

1 but there are these fixed rates that are going up and up  
2 and up. And at what time is there a cap on that?

3 Between the taxes, property taxes, they talk  
4 about finding, you know, the homeless places to live,  
5 they're driving retired people out of their homes. You  
6 can't take on the whole world and pay everyone's bills.  
7 You know, I'm a compassionate person.

8 But like this other woman said, we pay our  
9 bills on time. You use what you have left to survive on.  
10 When we were young, we didn't have much either. We just  
11 worked harder. We were responsible people, had the  
12 number of kids we could afford. We didn't count on other  
13 people paying our bills and coming to our aid.

14 When it's an occasional thing and there's a  
15 catastrophic event, you can almost see it. But at this  
16 point in time, it seems like it's a free-for-all.

17 And all these people that are on this  
18 socialist perspective where they want to pay everybody's  
19 bills and be the do-gooder, go along with that. Have it  
20 come out of your check. But the sum of us live  
21 responsibly. We expect the same thing from other people.

22 And I don't understand, when more people are  
23 moving into the area, now you're dividing that bill up  
24 between all those people, why it keeps going up. You  
25 would think you would have more money coming in, given

1 how many people are using the service.

2 So we can't keep paying people that get  
3 training in a voc school to work for a utility company  
4 like they're all brain surgeons. That's another problem.

5 That's all I have to say. Call me a bad  
6 person, but I'm practical. Thank you very much.

7 CHAIR DANNER: Thank you. Thank you for your  
8 comments.

9 Let me go back to Pam Barstow. Are you  
10 there?

11 PAM BARSTOW: I am.

12 CHAIR DANNER: Yes, go ahead, please.

13 PAM BARSTOW: Hello?

14 CHAIR DANNER: Yes, can you hear us?

15

16 COMMENTS BY PAM BARSTOW

17 PAM BARSTOW: Yes, I can.

18 I didn't know what this meeting was all  
19 about. And I just wanted to say that we're on a fixed  
20 income, and we can feel it every time our bills go up  
21 because we're already freezing to death trying to keep  
22 them down. And I just think that we can't take care of  
23 the whole world. We'd like to, but we can't. That's all  
24 I really have to say.

25 CHAIR DANNER: All right. Thank you for your

1 comments.

2 Morgan Taylor, are you there?

3 MORGAN TAYLOR: I am.

4 EDWARD TAYLOR: This is Edward Taylor,  
5 Morgan's husband. I'd like to say that --

6 CHAIR DANNER: Before you start, does Morgan  
7 Taylor want to speak? She's signed up.

8 EDWARD TAYLOR: She just passed over to me.

9 MORGAN TAYLOR: I concede the floor to my  
10 husband.

11 CHAIR DANNER: Okay. Thank you.

12 Edward Taylor, go ahead.

13

14 COMMENTS BY EDWARD TAYLOR

15 EDWARD TAYLOR: All right. Okay. When I  
16 first moved out of my house when I was a kid, I was faced  
17 with an electrical bill. And you know, instead of laying  
18 around and having somebody else, you know, pay my bill, I  
19 went out and got another job. I cut grass or whatever it  
20 was to make sure I paid my bills. I never freeloaded  
21 once.

22 And with all these people moving in now that  
23 need assistance, I see what they do with their money.  
24 They're out buying drugs and spending their money loosely  
25 on everything except their bills. And I'm tired of it.

1           And, you know, my wife, when she comes  
2 upstairs in the morning, she's dressed up like an Eskimo.  
3 I can't even hardly tell it's her because she's cold. We  
4 keep our heat down. We're retired. And, you know, power  
5 bill just keeps going up and up.

6           And here's Morgan. I'm going to pass it to  
7 Morgan here.

8

9           COMMENTS BY MORGAN TAYLOR

10           MORGAN TAYLOR: All right. We're going to do  
11 a double shot. Thank you very much for having us  
12 tonight.

13           I understand from what I heard at the very  
14 beginning of this meeting that there is something going  
15 into effect that will help with the collection of bills  
16 on these past due amounts, and that something hasn't been  
17 completed yet. And until it is, we're going to be hit,  
18 we, the people, with higher power bills. I say hurry up  
19 and get that thing fixed. Get the bill written or  
20 whatever it is, the article, quicker.

21           We are also on fixed income. And the first  
22 lady that spoke, she was right on.

23           Thank you. That's all I have.

24           CHAIR DANNER: All right. Thank you for your  
25 comments.

1 Leah Thomason, are you there?

2 MORGAN TAYLOR: Okay. Do you want to watch  
3 more of this?

4 (Inaudible)

5 CHAIR DANNER: All right. Katheryn Orłowski,  
6 are you there? Katheryn Orłowski?

7 Gayle Donohue?

8 GAYLE DONOHUE: Yes, I'm here.

9 CHAIR DANNER: Who is this?

10 GAYLE DONOHUE: Yes, I'm here. Gayle  
11 Donohue.

12 CHAIR DANNER: All right. Gayle Donohue, go  
13 ahead, please.

14

15 COMMENTS BY GAYLE DONOHUE

16 GAYLE DONOHUE: My husband and I too are  
17 seniors. We just turned 69 this November. And our  
18 children, our oldest child moved back into our house in  
19 April of last year. And our power bill went up to  
20 roughly \$300 for the house. They moved out -- sorry;  
21 they moved in in November of the previous year and they  
22 moved out in April of last year. And the power bill went  
23 up to roughly \$300 at that time. And it was assumed that  
24 that would happen because there's now four people in the  
25 house.

1           They moved out in April. My bill went down  
2 to roughly \$135 for the house.

3           And recently, it's spiked back up to over  
4 \$300 with just two of us here. And I don't know for  
5 certain if that was because of a rate increase, if that  
6 was because of the assessed fees that we're talking about  
7 this evening, or exactly what.

8           I know that it was very cold. But we keep  
9 the temperature at a reasonable 67, 68 degrees. So I can  
10 only assume that the rates have changed or we've been  
11 assessed amounts that are collection amounts, I guess.

12           And this cannot keep going. You know, our  
13 bill is going to be \$500 a month if this is going to keep  
14 going this way. And our incomes just won't manage this  
15 very well.

16           And so in order to make a change to this  
17 whole situation, your collection standards or your  
18 collection practices must change, because we are fixed  
19 income people that can't -- if we have to pay more  
20 electric bills, then we won't be able to afford food.

21           CHAIR DANNER: All right. Thank you very  
22 much.

23           Katheryn Orłowski, are you back with us?

24           KATHERYN ORŁOWSKI: I'm here. Can you hear  
25 me?

1 CHAIR DANNER: Yes, we can.

2

3 COMMENTS BY KATHERYN ORLOWSKI

4 KATHERYN ORLOWSKI: Okay. We all need  
5 energy. And more of our neighbors are paying 50 or 100  
6 percent of their income to housing. The inflation of all  
7 of our basic needs has put a strain on everyone,  
8 especially the middle class. The poor are just being  
9 annihilated.

10 I can't believe how many people are paying  
11 over 50 percent of their income, how many people are  
12 paying 100 percent of their income to housing, and how  
13 many people in the food banks. Those have all risen.

14 And this demographic is just getting bigger  
15 and bigger. We can see it with -- you know, we had 60  
16 people die last year in our county who are unhoused.

17 And so this is a real problem. And I think  
18 we've burdened the middle class. It's going to get real  
19 hard on them, and they're just going to send them into  
20 homelessness, too.

21 And AI is upon us. Cashier jobs are almost  
22 gone. I'm almost 50, and those jobs are almost gone.  
23 And all the behind the scenes jobs that are gone -- most  
24 of my income goes to housing.

25 I need LIHEAP to survive. And I would love

1 to have a decent job. I'm out there looking all the  
2 time. I'm smart. I'm educated. And I've had no choice.  
3 I need LIHEAP. And getting that is rocket science.

4 So I'm sure there are plenty of vulnerable  
5 people, families, children who need access to that,  
6 seniors, and they make it really difficult to get. And  
7 we just can't -- we can't burden the people who can't  
8 afford -- the middle class and the poor people because  
9 we're just going to make more homeless people and more  
10 people are going to end up dying.

11 So this is, like, really, really serious.  
12 And so I hope you, as a company -- because I could  
13 imagine a lot of collections are a losing battle. But if  
14 we go for this rate hike, and you get this and put more  
15 and more pressure on the middle class, you'll kill the  
16 poor people even more, and the middle class will be the  
17 next ones to be annihilated.

18 So we've got to come up with a different  
19 plan, because I'm just -- so many people are paying so  
20 much money and having to decide between do I have  
21 housing, food, or electricity.

22 Thank you.

23 CHAIR DANNER: All right. Thank you very  
24 much.

25 I'm going to go back to some names I called

1 on earlier and did not get a response.

2 So once again, Leah Thomason? Are you  
3 there?

4 Dave Parejo?

5 Dalan Lynette?

6 Bill Cummins?

7 Bruce Wilkinson?

8 Brett Williams?

9 Gary Butterfield?

10 Rose Ferguson?

11 All right, then. Andrew, let me ask if  
12 there's anyone else on the call who wishes to comment to  
13 us tonight.

14 I do see one hand raised with a number ending  
15 in 0217. Does that person wish to speak to us tonight?

16 Okay. Is there anyone else on the call  
17 tonight who wishes to share their thoughts with us?

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Am I allowed to go  
19 twice?

20 TINA CHAMPEAUX: Hello?

21 CHAIR DANNER: Yes.

22 TINA CHAMPEAUX: Hello?

23 CHAIR DANNER: Yes, who is speaking?

24 TINA CHAMPEAUX: Okay. Yeah. You called on  
25 me. It's 0217.

1 CHAIR DANNER: Yes. Did you wish to comment  
2 tonight?

3 TINA CHAMPEAUX: Yes, I do.

4 CHAIR DANNER: Okay. Go right ahead. What  
5 is your name, please?

6 TINA CHAMPEAUX: My name is Tina. And the  
7 last name is Champeaux. It's C-H-A-M-P-E-A-U-X.

8 CHAIR DANNER: Okay. Go ahead, please.

9

10 COMMENTS BY TINA CHAMPEAUX

11 TINA CHAMPEAUX: Okay. Well, I concur with  
12 what I'm hearing, the people who have signed on tonight.

13 And I'm a political activist. I work with  
14 legislators and everything, campaign managing and doing  
15 all that. So my eyes are continually out there.

16 And I'm also a single person. I lost my  
17 husband to COVID two years ago. We had two of the most  
18 horrible winters where our electric bills -- I mean, we  
19 almost couldn't keep warm. My budget plan this year went  
20 from 2-roughly-50-some dollars to almost \$500. It's  
21 doubled. My mortgage payment went from \$958 to over  
22 \$1,200 due to taxes.

23 We cannot keep sustaining this. Those of us  
24 who pay all of our bills -- I'm really sorry when there's  
25 less fortunate people who get into trouble, and a lot of

1 times it's not their fault. But we're also paying for  
2 people that are not responsible. And I do see that.

3 So I don't know what the answer is for you.  
4 But I really believe that those of us that are paying our  
5 bill to you, we cannot keep, you know, sustaining this,  
6 and everybody else not paying their bills.

7 I would like to have an instant answer for  
8 all this. I don't. But I'm very frustrated with how my  
9 bill has gone up. It's doubled. And pretty soon, I'm  
10 going to be the one not able to pay my bill.

11 Thank you, and you have a good evening.

12 CHAIR DANNER: All right. Thank you very  
13 much for your comments.

14 I see a hand raised with the number ending in  
15 4702.

16 ADDIE SANDALL: Yes. This is Addie Sandall.

17 CHAIR DANNER: Okay. Can you spell that,  
18 please?

19 ADDIE SANDALL: First name A-D-D-I-E; last  
20 name S-A-N-D-A-L-L.

21 CHAIR DANNER: All right. Thank you. Go  
22 ahead.

23

24 COMMENTS BY ADDIE SANDALL

25 ADDIE SANDALL: Thank you.

1           We are a one-income household. And I  
2 homeschool my children, so we are home all day, every  
3 day, and so we use electricity and gas for those  
4 purposes.

5           We have paid our bills on time consistently,  
6 and we do not feel like we should be penalized for people  
7 who have not paid their bills. If there are no  
8 consequences for not paying, then why would people not  
9 choose to, you know, skip a payment?

10           I do want to bring out that there's no other  
11 option for power or gas. It's not like we can go shop  
12 the market. This is our only option.

13           So we ask that you guys would work to keep  
14 rates as low as possible for your customers. Thank you.

15           CHAIR DANNER: All right. Thank you very  
16 much.

17           And I see a number ending in 2216. Would you  
18 like to talk to us tonight?

19           EVAN DAVIES: Can you hear me?

20           CHAIR DANNER: Yes, we can. Go ahead.

21           EVAN DAVIES: Yes, so my comment --

22           CHAIR DANNER: First of all, can you give us  
23 your name, please?

24           EVAN DAVIES: Evan.

25           CHAIR DANNER: And do you care to share your

1 last name?

2 CHAIR DANNER: EVAN, E-V-A-N; D-A-V-I-E-S,  
3 Davies.

4 CHAIR DANNER: Okay. Thank you very much.  
5 Go ahead.

6  
7 COMMENTS BY EVAN DAVIES

8 EVAN DAVIES: I don't know if you can respond  
9 to anything, but do I understand just the Washington  
10 Utilities and Transportation Commission reps are on this  
11 call, no PSE reps; is that correct?

12 CHAIR DANNER: There may be PSE reps on --  
13 who are watching.

14 EVAN DAVIES: Okay.

15 CHAIR DANNER: But if you have questions, as  
16 we said at the beginning, you want to talk to the Office  
17 of Public Counsel. Go ahead.

18 EVAN DAVIES: Okay. So the announcement for  
19 this conference call came -- I received it November 21 of  
20 last year. It was a one-pager from Puget Sound Energy.  
21 Some things it said, it says the commission indicated its  
22 intent to grant PSE's petition in part and to deny the  
23 petition in part.

24 So what we -- we as recipients of this, I  
25 don't know what the commission is considering to grant or

1 what they're going to deny. So that leads into why the  
2 PSE filed these -- or the reasons they're filing this  
3 change to the UT code.

4 And I think everybody's anchored on to the  
5 third one, is PSE is unable to adjust its credit  
6 collections processes before the conclusion of the  
7 docket. Although -- and so here's where it gets vague,  
8 and maybe not as transparent for us as customers that  
9 pay, is that PSE cannot predict how rates will be  
10 impacted. PSE anticipates increasing rates and customer  
11 rates.

12 So if you -- so would the rates also impact  
13 those that are already in arrears?

14 So are there arrears that are going to  
15 continue to grow even more so, and so the amount that PSE  
16 is going after would potentially increase or -- so  
17 there's a couple different things that unless that  
18 information can be gleaned somewhere -- I've been on your  
19 website and haven't be able to find it -- you know, what  
20 this commission is considering to approve, what the  
21 commission is considering to deny, and the vagueness of  
22 what PSE thinks the rates may or may not increase to and  
23 how much.

24 So it's really going to be a surprise again  
25 to us customers, of some percentage that got -- like most

1 everybody's recognized, they've increased from 2.5  
2 percent to over 12 percent over the last seven years.

3 So more information would be helpful,  
4 probably, to have a more informed decision and feedback.

5 But I appreciate your time.

6 CHAIR DANNER: All right. Thank you for your  
7 comment tonight.

8 And I see a number 4702. Have I called on  
9 you already? Number ending in 4702? Your hand is still  
10 raised. all right.

11 Scarlett Caldwell, I believe we already heard  
12 from you.

13 SCARLETT CALDWELL: May I speak again, if you  
14 don't mind?

15 CHAIR DANNER: Briefly.

16 SCARLETT CALDWELL: Sure.

17 CHAIR DANNER: But we're not going to be  
18 giving everybody a second round.

19 SCARLETT CALDWELL: I'll be quick.

20 CHAIR DANNER: But go ahead briefly.

21

22 ADDITIONAL COMMENTS BY SCARLETT CALDWELL

23 SCARLETT CALDWELL: When I was younger, I was  
24 pretty much homeless twice. I was unemployed, and life  
25 happened. And I had an apartment, but I had to sell

1 every single thing in my apartment. And I did that  
2 because I'm a responsible person and I wasn't going to  
3 ask anybody for help because I had the means, the  
4 capability, and the intelligence to figure it out on my  
5 own.

6 The situation wasn't my own. I didn't do  
7 anything bad. I've never done a drug in my life, I've  
8 never had a drink in my life, I've never smoked a  
9 cigarette. I'm a pretty good person when it comes to the  
10 morality scale.

11 But I sold every single thing I owned because  
12 I'd rather have no furniture and my morals and pay my  
13 bills and not go into debt, but have a nice place to live  
14 than the alternative.

15 And, you know, people who care, people who  
16 work hard, people who are responsible, it doesn't mean  
17 that we're not struggling, too. It just means that we  
18 are willing to take action to do the right things to put  
19 ourselves in a positive place that maybe others don't  
20 have enough motivation to do.

21 It doesn't mean we're not willing to help  
22 those people, but that the degradation and negative  
23 impact that it causes the rest of the people who care  
24 more about their own situation is not kind.

25 Additionally, like I mentioned before, I am

1 the president of the HOA for my community. I do hundreds  
2 of hours worth of labor, mentally and physically, for my  
3 community. I don't make a dime. I don't even get free  
4 HOA dues.

5 And I do collections protocols. Every single  
6 year, people don't pay their bills. Every single year,  
7 people have bad landscaping and get a notice for a fee  
8 because they didn't fix it for five months. And I send  
9 an email. I send a letter. I send a text message. I  
10 make a phone call. I have a conversation. I show up at  
11 their door sometimes. I do everything I can to get them  
12 to pay their bill. And if not, I take legal action.

13 PSE needs to take more responsibility for  
14 their own policies and procedures and put the work in  
15 themselves, and not place that work upon the people that  
16 they're supposed to be providing services to.

17 CHAIR DANNER: All right. Thank you very  
18 much.

19 SCARLETT CALDWELL: Thanks, Dave.

20 CHAIR DANNER: Okay. There is a message in  
21 the chat from Tom. Tom, why don't you just go ahead, if  
22 you wish to speak.

23 TOM (NO LAST NAME GIVEN): All right. Can  
24 you hear me?

25 CHAIR DANNER: Yes.

1 TOM (NO LAST NAME GIVEN): I don't know if my  
2 mute is on or not. My computer audio is probably not  
3 working.

4 COMMISSIONER RENDAHL: We can hear you.

5 CHAIR DANNER: We can hear you.

6

7 COMMENTS BY TOM (NO LAST NAME GIVEN)

8 TOM (NO LAST NAME GIVEN): All right. My  
9 only comment on this is it's a lose/lose situation for  
10 Puget Sound Energy. They need to provide service to  
11 everyone that they can, but they're not really in charge  
12 of controlling their rates. That's controlled by the  
13 UTC.

14 So even if they did do all the math and said,  
15 hey, this is what we want to bill someone because this is  
16 what it costs, they may not be able to because the UTC  
17 might say no, that's too much, or you need to do more.  
18 So their hands are somewhat tied in what rates they can  
19 charge people. And that is fair to everyone because they  
20 keep the price down.

21 However, it's not fair to everyone because it  
22 limits PSE's ability to collect money and potentially  
23 provide more service.

24 And as far as comments made about oh, more  
25 people are coming in, rates should come down, again, PSE

1 has a set rate. They can only go and change the rates so  
2 often. They can't really change it by market.

3 Where I'm getting on this is PSE does all  
4 they can to do and support the customers that are out  
5 here and the citizens. They can't make all the decisions  
6 independently. They're dependent on the UTC.

7 So it really comes down to a government  
8 entity to decide what is best for the people as a whole  
9 in the service area, and that is do we raise the rates  
10 where some people can't pay, turn off power, and impact  
11 them, or give people time to pay it off in payment  
12 programs and those types of things.

13 And yes, it may not be fair, and yes,  
14 everyone is on a fixed income. Even people on a salary  
15 are on fixed income. It might be higher but it's still  
16 fixed.

17 I say let PSE go after the people, but with  
18 some semblance of compassion and justification of going  
19 after them.

20 CHAIR DANNER: All right. Thank you very  
21 much for your comments.

22 Is there anyone else on the call who wishes  
23 to share comments with us tonight?

24 All right. I haven't heard any other folks.  
25 I see again a hand still raised from 4702, but I believe

1 we have heard from that individual.

2 So if there are no other commenters tonight  
3 -- all right. I see one hand just came up, 0217. Who is  
4 this?

5 TINA CHAMPEAUX: This is Tina Champeaux. I  
6 -- hello? Can you hear me?

7 CHAIR DANNER: Yes. And you have already --

8 TINA CHAMPEAUX: Okay. Yeah, I did.

9 The only thing I wanted, I don't want to make  
10 a comment. I could not get the email address  
11 "utility@something.wa? I would really like to have that  
12 e-mail address that you can make comments to.

13 CHAIR DANNER: Absolutely. Andrew Roberts,  
14 do you want to share that information again? Perhaps put  
15 it up on the screen.

16 TINA CHAMPEAUX: And can you go slowly so I  
17 can get it all down?

18 CHAIR DANNER: And Andrew, can you go  
19 slowly?

20 COMMISSIONER RENDAHL: So Andrew, if somebody  
21 is on the phone, they may not be able to see this. So  
22 you may need to read it slowly.

23 CHAIR DANNER: Andrew, could you please read  
24 this slowly so people who are on the phone can take the  
25 information down.

1 BRIDGIT FEESER: Commissioners, this is  
2 Bridgit Feeser. Andrew must be having technical  
3 difficulties, so I will go ahead and read the email  
4 address.

5 CHAIR DANNER: That would be great. Thank  
6 you.

7 BRIDGIT FEESER: So people can submit  
8 comments to the following email address, and that is:  
9 Comments@UTC.wa.gov. And again that would be C-O --

10 TINA CHAMPEAUX: Could you say that again,  
11 please?

12 BRIDGIT FEESER: Yes.  
13 C-O-M-M-E-N-T-S@UTC.wa.gov.

14 TINA CHAMPEAUX: Thank you.

15 COMMISSIONER RENDAHL: And I believe we also  
16 have the information for the attorney general's office at  
17 the beginning. And that is Utility@ATG -- for attorney  
18 general -- atg.wa.gov.

19 So there's two ways to comment. One is to  
20 the commission, and one is to the attorney general's  
21 office.

22 CHAIR DANNER: All right. Tad O'Neill, you  
23 came on video. Do you want to share something?

24 ATTORNEY O'NEILL: Commissioner Danner, I was  
25 going to give that same email address.

1 CHAIR DANNER: Oh, okay.

2 ATTORNEY O'NEILL: So again, this is Tad  
3 Robinson O'Neill with the attorney general's office. And  
4 I represent public counsel, whose job is to represent the  
5 public.

6 And if you want to submit comments to  
7 Utility@atg.wa.gov, we'll make sure that gets into the  
8 record.

9 CHAIR DANNER: All right. And while I have  
10 you here, have we agreed on a deadline for submission of  
11 written comments?

12 ATTORNEY O'NEILL: So this is a little bit  
13 unusual. The public hearing happened after the hearing.  
14 And we have an existing deadline of February 15 to submit  
15 the public comment to the commission.

16 In order for my staff and for Andrew to  
17 collate the comments, we need to receive the comments by  
18 tomorrow, February 9, at 5:00 p.m. so that staff can get  
19 them collated and put them into the exhibit to be filed,  
20 unless that deadline is moved from the 15th.

21 CHAIR DANNER: Okay. I don't believe we have  
22 moved that deadline. So we will stick to tomorrow, close  
23 of business. If there's a need to move that deadline, we  
24 can consider that at a later date. But I think we will  
25 ask folks if they have written comments, to submit them

1 within the next -- by close of business tomorrow.

2 Commissioners, is that okay with you?

3 COMMISSIONER RENDAHL: Yes. I mean, I think  
4 we could extend it by a few days if need be. But if  
5 people can submit them by tomorrow, usually we have a few  
6 days after a public hearing. I'm not sure we factored  
7 that into this deadline.

8 CHAIR DANNER: Well, again, it is unusual to  
9 have a public comment hearing after the evidentiary  
10 hearing. But let's see how it goes. If we see comments  
11 coming in after the fact, we'll have to deal with that.

12 COMMISSIONER DOUMIT: And I agree with that,  
13 Mr. Chair.

14 CHAIR DANNER: All right. Thank you.

15 Let's -- let me ask 7707, phone number ending  
16 in 7707, you raised your hand?

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes. I would just  
18 like to ask that if they're going to have the deadline  
19 tomorrow for that, if there's a telephone number that we  
20 can call as well. Because we don't have internet service  
21 where we are, and I'd like to comment.

22 CHAIR DANNER: We can give you a phone  
23 number. Andrew or Bridgit?

24 ANDREW ROBERTS: Sorry. I'm here. I had a  
25 few mute buttons clicked last time. Over-precaution, I

1 suppose.

2 CHAIR DANNER: Okay. A telephone number that  
3 people can provide comments?

4 ANDREW ROBERTS: Our toll free number is  
5 888-333-9882.

6 COMMISSIONER RENDAHL: Can you repeat that?

7 ANDREW ROBERTS: 888-333-9882.

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: That's for the  
9 commission.

10 But how about for the attorney general?

11 CHAIR DANNER: Well, either way, if you  
12 submit -- if you submit comments to either the commission  
13 or the attorney general, they will make it into the  
14 docket and they will be considered by the commissioners  
15 as we deliberate.

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

17 CHAIR DANNER: Tad O'Neill, do you have a  
18 number for people to call, or is that the commission's  
19 number?

20 ATTORNEY O'NEILL: So this is my first public  
21 comment hearing that I've attended as public counsel.  
22 And what I can say is that we do work with commission  
23 staff to make sure the comments get into the record,  
24 whether you provide them to the UTC or to the attorney  
25 general's office.

1 CHAIR DANNER: Okay.

2 ATTORNEY O'NEILL: So you only need to  
3 provide it once.

4 I do have a phone number. It's 206-464-7744.  
5 206-464-7744.

6 We do not have a toll free number.

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: All right. Thank you.

8 CHAIR DANNER: All right. And thank you,  
9 Scarlett Caldwell, for putting that in the chat.

10 All right. Again, last call for comments for  
11 those who have not yet provided comments. If there's  
12 anyone on the call who wishes to share their thoughts  
13 with us tonight?

14 All right. In that case, I just want to  
15 thank everybody who joined us tonight and provided  
16 comments. All of these will be made part of the record.

17 Again, we'll be accepting written comments  
18 until close of business tomorrow, or telephonic comments,  
19 and we will consider them as we go forward.

20 So unless there's anything else to come  
21 before the commission tonight, we will adjourn our public  
22 comment hearing.

23 Commissioners, do we have anything that --  
24 we're ready to go then?

25 All right. Thank you, everyone.

1 COMMISSIONER RENDAHL: Thanks, everyone.

2 COMMISSIONER DOUMIT: Yes. Thank you to all  
3 the commenters. Thank you.

4 CHAIR DANNER: All right. Appreciate  
5 everyone's participation tonight. Have a good evening,  
6 and we will proceed with getting these into the record,  
7 and we'll make a decision in due course on this petition.  
8 Thank you much.

9 (Hearing concluded at 6:56 p.m.)

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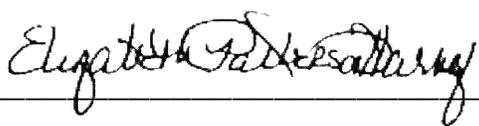
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STATE OF WASHINGTON )  
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I, Elizabeth Patterson Harvey, a Certified Court Reporter and Registered Professional Reporter within and for the State of Washington, do hereby certify under penalty of perjury that the foregoing legal recordings were transcribed under my direction; that I received the electronic recording in the proprietary format; that I am not a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties hereto, nor financially interested in its outcome.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 27th day of February, 2024.


ELIZABETH PATTERSON HARVEY, RPR, CCR 2731