THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF OHIO

In the Matter of the) CASE NOS. Application of the East Ohio) 07-829-GA-AIR Gas Company, doing business) 07-830-GA-ALT as Dominion East Ohio,) 07-831-GA-AAM for Authority to Increase) 08-169-GA-ALT Rates For Gas Distribution) 06-1453-GA-UNC Service and Other Related Matters. **ORIGINAL**

BE IT REMEMBERED, that upon the hearing of the above-entitled matter, held at Frank J. Lausche State Office Building, 2nd Floor Auditorium, 615 West Superior Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio, before Christine M.T. Pirik, Attorney Examiner, and commencing on Monday, the 4th day of August 2008, at 12:30 o'clock p.m., at which

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time the following proceedings were had.

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1	APPEARANCES:	
2		
3	On Behalf of the Public Utilit	ies Commission
4	Of Ohio:	
5	PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMIS	SSION OF OHIO
6	BY: Christine Pirik, Attorn	ney Examiner
7	180 East Broad Street	
8	Columbus, Ohio 43215	
9	800/686-7826	
10		
11	On Behalf of Ohio Consumers' C	Counsel:
12	OFFICE OF THE OHIO CONS	SUMERS' COUNSEL
13	BY: Joseph P. Serio	
14	Assistant Consumers' Co	ounsel
15	10 West Broad Street, S	Suite 1800
16	Columbus, Ohio 43215-34	185
17	614/466-8574	
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1	MS. PIRIK: The Public
2	Utilities Commission of Ohio has assigned for
3	public hearing this time and place Case Nos.
4	07-829-GA-AIR, 07-830-GA-ALT, 07-831-GA-AAM,
5	08-169-GA-ALT and 06-1453-GA-UNC, which are
6	captioned "In the matter of the Application of
7	the East Ohio Gas Company, doing business as
8	Dominion East Ohio, for Authority to Increase
9	Rates for Gas Distribution Service and Other
10	Related Matters."
11	My name is Christine Pirik. I am the
12	Deputy Director of the Commission's legal
13	department and I will be conducting this hearing
14	today. We also have with us two Commission
15	personnel who are sitting out in the foyer right
16	here and they are signing people up to testify.
17	However, as you're sitting here, if you've not
18	signed up to testify, once I'm through the list
19	of those who have signed up, I will ask for
20	others in the audience who wish to testify, so
21	you will not miss your opportunity. Never fear
22	if you want to testify, you will have that
23	opportunity.
24	At this time I would like to take
25	appearances on behalf of the parties that are

- 1 present today. On behalf of the company?
- 2 MR. WHITT: Thank you, Your
- 3 Honor. On behalf of Dominion East Ohio from the
- 4 Columbus office of Jones Day, Mark Whitt,
- 5 325 John H. McConnell Boulevard, Columbus, Ohio,
- 6 43215.
- 7 MS. PIRIK: On behalf of the
- 8 Office of Consumers' Counsel?
- 9 MR. SERIO: Thank you, Your
- 10 Honor. On behalf of the residential utility
- customers of East Ohio Gas Company, Janine
- 12 Migden-Ostrander, Consumers' Counse, Joseph P.
- 13 Serio, 10 West Broad Street, Columbus, Ohio,
- 14 43215. And we do have representatives here also
- 15 if you have any utility-related questions at the
- 16 table outside. Thank you.
- 17 MS. PIRIK: There are other
- interveners in this case, and I will list them
- 19 so you will be aware of who those individuals or
- 20 entities are. The Ohio Partners for Affordable
- 21 Energy, Neighborhood Environmental Coalition,
- 22 Empowerment Center of Greater Cleveland,
- 23 Cleveland Housing Network, Consumer for Fair
- 24 Utility Rates, Interstate Gas Supply, Integrys
- 25 Energy Services, Dominion Retail, Stand Energy

- 1 Corporation, United Workers Union of America,
- 2 Local G555, The Ohio Oil & Gas Association, and
- 3 the City of Cleveland. Each of these parties
- 4 represents different constituencies in the cases
- 5 that are before the Commission. Dominion filed
- 6 these rate case proceedings initially August 30,
- 7 2007. The local public hearing scheduled in
- 8 this case are only one aspect of the process.
- 9 Last week we held local hearings in Youngstown,
- 10 Ohio; Lima, Ohio; Akron and Canton, Ohio. Today
- 11 we are here in Cleveland. Tomorrow we will have
- 12 someone in Marietta. In addition we will have
- 13 an evening hearing in Cleveland. I believe it
- 14 is August 18th. We will have an evening hearing
- in Youngstown on August 29th -- or on August
- 16 19th, and on August 21st we will have an evening
- 17 hearing in Akron, so there will be additional
- 18 opportunities. We are very interested in
- 19 hearing from the public, and we do review all of
- the transcripts in these proceedings.
- 21 The purpose of this public hearing is
- 22 to receive comments from the public regarding
- 23 the applications that Dominion has filed before
- 24 the Commission. As you notice, there is a court
- 25 reporter here. She will be writing down

- 1 everything that is said in today's hearing so
- 2 that the Commissioners and other staff members
- 3 will have an opportunity to read through the
- 4 testimony that is given. I mentioned off the
- 5 record but I'll mention again for those who have
- 6 just joined us that there is a microphone at the
- 7 podium. It is a handheld microphone. If you
- 8 could please use that microphone so that
- 9 everyone will be able to hear. That would be
- 10 greatly appreciated. At this time I will begin
- 11 calling witnesses. Congressman Kucinich.
- I will also swear in witnesses. I
- 13 will ask you to take an oath of truth, and then
- 14 I will ask you to state your name and address
- 15 for the record and spell them for the record to
- 16 be sure that they're clear.
- 17 (Thereupon, Dennis Kucinich was
- sworn.)
- 19 MR. KUCINICH: Thank you very much
- 20 and I thank the Public Utilities Commission for
- 21 holding these hearings. I strongly oppose
- 22 Dominion/East Ohio's proposed rate increases,
- which, if approved, will cost Ohioans nearly
- 24 \$100 million more per year. I ask that you
- 25 reject any attempt on the part of Dominion to

- 1 downplay its strong financial standing and
- 2 outlook in an effort to rationalize rate
- 3 increases which would, according to its own 2007
- 4 annual report, support a 12 percent return in
- 5 equity.
- In 2007, Dominion, the parent company
- 7 of Dominion East Ohio, posted a net income of
- 8 \$2.5 billion, an estimated 84 percent increase
- 9 from the year before and an estimated 240
- 10 percent increase from 2005.
- 11 While the report issued by the staff
- of the PUCO correctly denies Dominion East
- 13 Ohio's proposed 7 percent rate hike for usage
- which totals approximately 75 million annually,
- 15 it replaces this request with an approximate
- 4 percent increase through inflating the fixed
- 17 distribution rate. It straps a disproportional
- 18 burden on the backs of those consumers who have
- 19 chosen to conserve, many of who are low income.
- 20 An additional \$12 per month per charge before
- gas even begins to flow will be detrimental to
- 22 many.
- Dominion will tell you that its
- 24 operating material, maintenance and fuel costs
- 25 have increased in the past several months and

- 1 years. What they won't tell you is that the
- 2 cost of living for the average consumer has
- 3 increased substantially as well over the same
- 4 period of time. Electric prices are up,
- 5 gasoline prices are through the roof,
- 6 prescription drug prices are up, grocery prices
- 7 are up. A seemingly modest natural gas bill
- 8 increase could lead to low-income individuals
- 9 and families having to choose between groceries,
- 10 prescription drugs or transportation in the
- 11 winter months ahead.
- 12 Over 15,500 homeowners in Cuyahoga
- 13 County fell victim to foreclosure in 2007.
- 14 Early numbers for 2008 suggest that this trend
- is only worsening. High utility bills are
- 16 undoubtedly a contributing factor to the
- financial straits which many people from
- 18 Cuyahoga County find themselves in. Such an
- 19 increase as East Ohio -- strike that -- as
- 20 Dominion East is asking for would contribute to
- 21 additional foreclosures in the future. For
- 22 those with a natural gas furnace, natural gas is
- 23 a basic necessity. Payment is not optional.
- 24 Rate hikes like this hit hardest those who are
- 25 already living at the edge of their means. We

- 1 must not let Dominion dump its purported costs
- 2 onto low-income and fixed income people like
- 3 seniors, while Dominion continues to rack up
- 4 profits.
- 5 According to the publication Business
- 6 Week, the president and CEO of Dominion received
- 7 a total calculated compensation of \$15,118,207
- 8 in 2007. This amount represents an average of
- 9 39 percent of the annual increase for customers
- 10 of Dominion East Ohio which the PUCO staff
- 11 recommended.
- Now if you think about that, part of
- this rate increase is going to go for the
- 14 president and CEO of this energy company. We're
- 15 making all of the people in this area pay more
- 16 for gas so that he can make \$15 million in a
- 17 single year.
- In addition, the proposed
- 19 distribution rate increase does not even fully
- 20 take into consideration millions of dollars in
- 21 increased costs that consumers will face if the
- proposed \$2.6 billion 25-year pipeline
- 23 infrastructure replacement plan, or the \$126
- 24 million automated meet reading device plan is
- approved in this case. Such programs will

- 1 increase profit for Dominion in the long run
- 2 through increasing consistency of consumer use
- 3 and operational efficiency respectively.
- 4 Dominion should invest on its own in
- 5 these programs without passing the costs onto
- 6 consumers. PUCO approval of such charges to be
- 7 passed on to consumers will mean short-term
- 8 consumer investment in Dominion's long-term
- 9 profit margin. Every utility has to maintain an
- 10 infrastructure. That's how they make their
- 11 money. They should have to pay for their own
- 12 infrastructure. They shouldn't make the
- 13 consumers pay for their infrastructure.
- I want to thank you again for holding
- these hearings, and I would respectively remind
- 16 you that the purpose for the PUCO's existence is
- 17 to ensure that adequate consumer protections are
- 18 in place. A decision to allow Dominion East
- 19 Ohio to raise its rates in response to the
- 20 alleged increase in costs would be a slap in the
- 21 face to millions of consumers who are facing
- 22 more and more increased costs of their own every
- 23 day. The PUCO this vital opportunity to protect
- 24 the public from any proposed raised increases by
- 25 Dominion East Ohio. I thank you again. I have

- 1 a copy of my testimony here, and we'll be
- 2 sending a letter that describes the testimony to
- 3 Mr. Schriber.
- 4 MS. PIRIK: Thank you. Thank
- 5 you, Congressman.
- 6 Bill Mountcastle. I apologize ahead
- 7 of time if I mispronounce names. You can help
- 8 me with that when you come up.
- 9 (Thereupon, Bill Mountcastle was
- 10 sworn.)
- 11 MS. PIRIK: Please state your
- 12 name and address and spelling for the record.
- 13 MR. MOUNTCASTLE: My name is Bill
- 14 Mountcastle. I live at 4360 West 194th Street,
- 15 Cleveland, Ohio, 44135.
- 16 MS. PIRIK: Thank you. You may
- 17 proceed.
- 18 MR. MOUNTCASTLE: I just wanted to
- 19 qualify myself as a witness. I've been married
- 20 41 years to the same woman. I've raised three
- 21 children in my house that over the years I've
- 22 managed finally to pay for 38 years. And I live
- in a modest three-bedroom, one-bathroom house on
- 24 the west side of Cleveland, and I have to agree
- 25 with Councilman Kucinich -- Congressman

- 1 Kucinich, I should say. I just can't understand
- 2 how from what I understand, we'll be paying
- 3 \$17.50 more a month for our gas whether we use
- 4 more gas or less gas. I can't tell you how many
- 5 years in the winter when we set our thermostat
- 6 at 65 degrees and we put on a sweater or wrap an
- 7 afghan that my mother made, God rest her soul,
- 8 around our shoulders to keep warm in the winter,
- 9 and now we're told that -- we were trying to
- 10 conserve energy, we've had new windows put in
- our house, we've had insulation put in our
- 12 attic, and, what, is it all for not? If I'm
- going to pay a rate of \$17.50 a month more
- whether I use more gas or not, it just seems
- 15 ludicrous. I can't see how they could possibly
- 16 think about raising the rates.
- 17 I think that the gas company should
- 18 sharpen their pencils and run more efficiently.
- 19 And certainly it can't justify someone making
- 20 \$15 million running a utility that I have no
- 21 choice -- I'm not going to be able to go across
- 22 the street and run my furnace. It's just as bad
- 23 as the electric company. The PUCO is supposed
- 24 to control them, and the guy that runs the
- 25 electric company makes I don't know how many

- 1 millions of dollars. It's just not right. It's
- 2 not fair, and that's pretty much my opinion. I
- 3 wanted to voice it. Thank you.
- 4 MS. PIRIK: Thank you. Sarah
- 5 Puri.
- 6 (Thereupon, Sarah Puri was sworn.)
- 7 MS. PIRIK: Could you please
- 8 state your name and address and spelling of your
- 9 name for the record?
- 10 MS. PURI: My name is Sarah Puri,
- 11 S-a-r-a-h P-u-r-i, and I live at 13217 Cooley
- 12 Avenue, 44111.
- First of all, I want to thank the
- 14 Commission for this opportunity. Heating our
- 15 homes takes a major bite out of our budget and
- 16 it impacts not only what we spend when we go to
- the grocery store, and not just our comfort
- level, and not infrequently it impacts our
- 19 health. I am here like the two previous
- 20 speakers to oppose Dominion East's requests to
- 21 the Commission to approve an additional flat
- 22 rate transportation charge on top of the current
- 23 transportation rate which varies with usage.
- 24 While the rate based on usage varies with the
- 25 amount of gas the consumer uses and is

- 1 influenced by the size of the home and the
- 2 season, the new flat rate which Dominion has
- 3 asked for remains the same whether we're in the
- 4 dog days of August or mid-January blizzard and
- 5 whether you live in a mansion or a dog house.
- 6 First of all this, this raises issues
- 7 of equity. My next-door neighbor has a small
- 8 two-bedroom, one-bath home. If the Commission
- 9 approves the request, she will be helping
- 10 subsidize my gas bill and we'll both end up
- subsidizing the mansion, an eight-minute
- 12 right-of-way in the next neighborhood.
- 13 Dominion's justification for this increase is
- 14 based in part on employee benefits and lobbying
- 15 expenditures, and I just wonder which employees
- are getting the biggest benefit as the
- 17 Congressman pointed out. I think probably the
- 18 largest piece of that will go to the CEO.
- And while employee benefits I must
- 20 admit and agree that a company should have big
- 21 responsibility to employees, but lobbying
- 22 expenditures. For me to comment on lobbying
- 23 expenditures is like asking a NASA scientist to
- 24 comment on a reported sighting of a UFO over the
- 25 lake near Burk Airport. I mean, it's too

- 1 outrageous and it speaks for itself.
- While the problem of equity is a
- 3 serious one, it is not the most invidious
- 4 implication of Dominion's request. Dominion's
- 5 request, to put it bluntly, is an attempt to
- 6 control the market rather than follow the market
- and, as such, it is a frontal attack on
- 8 conservation. At this time it seems a little
- 9 out of kilter with such different flares as Al
- 10 Gore on the left and on the right, Pickens that
- 11 (inaudible) flea markets are both calling for
- 12 conservation. Dominion is out of sync not only
- 13 with its customers but what appears to be a
- 14 growing national consensus. The Commission, in
- 15 light of some recent decisions, is being
- 16 increasingly seen as just another arm of the
- corporate state, and I beg the Commissioners to
- 18 carefully consider their responsibility to the
- 19 larger constituency and prove to all of us that
- 20 this growing public perception is incorrect and
- 21 you can do this voting against Dominion's
- 22 ill-considered and irresponsible request.
- Thank you very much.
- 24 MS. PIRIK: Robert Gruss.
- 25 (Thereupon, Robert Gruss was sworn.)

- 1 MS. PIRIK: Could you please
- 2 state your name and address and spelling for the
- 3 record?
- 4 MR. GRUSS: Robert P. Gruss,
- 5 G-r-u-s-s, Cleveland, Ohio, 44121. 1513
- 6 Maplegrove Road.
- 7 My name is Bob, and I'm retired on
- 8 social security disability due to degenerative
- 9 arthritis. I'm 67 years old. This proposed
- 10 adjustment to the monthly gas service charge by
- 11 the PUCO is like a regressive tax on people like
- 12 me, because I make a little over a five figure
- income a year with my social security payments.
- 14 I do not receive proceeds from a private
- pension, 401K or the IRS. I am fortunate
- 16 because I do not yet have high blood pressure,
- 17 heart disease or heart failure, conditions which
- 18 along with medication side effects would
- 19 predispose me to a risk of hypothermia in the
- 20 winter. I can still dial down the thermostat.
- 21 How long will my luck hold out in that regard at
- 22 my age? I have taken advantage of a deferred
- 23 county loan to get an Energy Star furnace, and a
- 24 social agency insulated my walls and ceilings.
- 25 I've done all the right things for conservation

- 1 purposes to safeguard my fragile financial
- 2 situation, but now I find, according to the PUCO
- 3 rate chart published in the Plain Dealer
- 4 Saturday, August 2, because I heat my home at a
- 5 level of 30,000 cubic foot of gas a year, I will
- 6 see my gas service charge increased by \$115 a
- 7 year, even after delivery charges are deducted
- 8 from the bill, while the guy in the mansion who
- 9 uses 180,000 cubic feet, six times what I use
- 10 will, in a final calculation, save \$15.99 a
- 11 year. I ask you is that fair? Is that based on
- 12 ability to pay? \$115 increase may not seem like
- 13 much a year when you're working, but if you're
- 14 disabled like me and tied to a fixed income,
- so-called small expenses have a cumulative
- 16 effect and become large expenses. To paraphrase
- 17 Senator Everett McKinley, "\$100 here and \$100
- there, pretty soon you're talking about some
- 19 real money" at my income level. On top of this,
- 20 social security cost of living increase that I
- got which is tied to wages increased only 2
- 22 percent last year while prices increased four
- 23 and a half percent. I lost out and so did many
- 24 other retirees in my condition.
- I know the PUCO representatives are

- 1 going to say that the poor and elderly can
- 2 receive home energy assistance to alleviate some
- 3 of this additional charge, but too many people
- 4 sign up for the HEAP program. They had to
- 5 eliminate some to provide air conditioners for
- 6 the ill and elderly to wart off heat stroke.
- 7 HEAP is in trouble because the increase by
- 8 Congress was decoupled form the stimulus package
- 9 passed in February because Bush threatened to
- 10 veto the whole bill if HEAP and other social
- 11 add-ons were included. It certainly does not
- 12 seem right to put more strain on energy
- 13 assistance by adding a regressive and poorly
- 14 considered service charge increase at a time
- when food costs are going through the roof,
- 16 gasoline is four dollars a gallon, electricity
- deregulation next year assures of higher rates,
- and many suburbs, including my own, want school
- 19 levy increases. This proposed regressive flat
- 20 service charge adds injury to insult and
- 21 apparently unique to Ohio since the other 49
- 22 states would increase yearly in some increments,
- 23 so much per MCF and have the utility open their
- 24 books and show their fair profits -- if their
- 25 fair profits are threatened.

- In conclusion, I beseech you to go
- 2 back to the original rate proposal last year.
- 3 Consider the need for year-by-year increases, so
- 4 much per MCF rather than a flat regressive
- 5 charge on everybody, which hurts the poor and
- 6 working class and punishes the ones that
- 7 conserve for energy security or protect the
- 8 planet from climate change. If this proposal
- 9 increase and the service charge is approved as
- 10 presently structured, all I can do is use the
- words of a well-known talk show host and say,
- where is the outrage? Thank you.
- 13 MS. PIRIK: Pat Sharkey.
- 14 (Thereupon, Pat Sharkey was sworn.)
- MS. SHARKEY: My name is Pat
- 16 Sharkey. I live at 3406 West 148th Street in
- 17 Cleveland. I would like to thank the PUCO for
- 18 holding this meeting today. The last time they
- 19 did, there were 30,000 more people in downtown
- 20 Cleveland attending a sporting event which
- 21 doubled the parking rates and there were very
- 22 few people in this room.
- 23 Most of my information is from the
- 24 news media so I apologize if any of it's wrong
- 25 because the news media uses predictions better

- 1 known as guesses.
- I am now paying \$5.70 for a pipe to
- 3 come in my home with nothing in it with the
- 4 possibility of something being in it. Dominion
- 5 East Ohio wants to raise -- it's been proposed
- 6 that this rate be raised to \$17.50. That's not
- 7 100 percent raise, that's not a 200 percent
- 8 raise, that's not a 300 percent raise, that's
- 9 more than a 300 percent raise in that fee. Then
- there's the poor people who are getting
- 11 assistance paying their heating bills, or the
- deadbeats who don't pay their bills at all. I'm
- also paying part of their fees.
- 14 According to the Associated Press,
- 15 the CEO of Dominion's parent company last year
- 16 made \$13.3 million. With Dennis Kucinich's
- 17 numbers, I guess -- the 15 million also includes
- their stock options, pension and deferred
- 19 compensation, as well as other freebies or perks
- or whatever they get. Each fall I weatherproof
- 21 my windows in my home, and each spring I take
- 22 the weatherproofing off. I have five rooms, two
- 23 bedrooms. I close off my dining room, kitchen
- 24 and one bedroom upstairs. My furnace does not
- 25 go on until the first of November, and it comes

- off on April 30th or before that. Inspectors
- 2 who go into some of the houses of the poor where
- 3 they're receiving assistance from those of us
- 4 who are paying, have sometimes found people's
- 5 thermostats up to 80 degrees with children
- 6 running around with T-shirts and bare feet. I'm
- 7 paying for this.
- 8 There are a lot of expensive suits in
- 9 this room, some of which belong to law firms,
- 10 some of which are East Ohio employees. I'm very
- 11 intimidated by this. It makes me feel as if
- 12 they're vultures and I'm their prey. Dominion
- wants a \$75 million raise. Lay off the CEO, fix
- 14 your equipment, don't buy new equipment, don't
- 15 replace retirees, and that's just a start, we
- 16 didn't even get down to sharpening the pencils.
- 17 If the consumer is East Ohio Gas's cash cow and
- 18 the PUCO continues to let them be, there's no
- 19 reason to tighten our belts or conserve. My
- 20 most recent bill -- if this line fee would go
- through, my most recent gas bill would have
- 22 doubled. Lowering the price of the gas a little
- 23 bit while raising the line hurts me
- 24 tremendously. Please don't rubber stamp this.
- I had one dealing with the PUCO with

- 1 a utility that -- an independent utility. After
- 2 I contacted the -- after this company stole my
- money, I contacted the PUCO and I got a check
- 4 within two days. The sad part was I got a
- 5 letter from the PUCO kind of insinuating that I
- 6 wasn't very smart, and in it it said that the
- 7 company didn't do anything wrong. That makes me
- 8 feel very bad. Please, please take this into
- 9 consideration. Look at this from all sides.
- 10 Thank you.
- 11 MS. PIRIK: Thank you.
- 12 Valarie McCall.
- 13 (Thereupon, Valarie McCall was
- 14 sworn.)
- 15 MS. PIRIK: Please state your
- 16 name and address for the record.
- 17 MS. McCALL: Sure. It's Valarie
- 18 McCall, 601 Lakeside Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio,
- 19 44114. It's Valarie, V-a-l-a-r-i-e, McCall,
- 20 M-c-C-a-1-1.
- 21 Good afternoon. My name is Valarie
- 22 McCall and I am Chief of Government Affairs for
- 23 the City of Cleveland, Office of Mayor Frank
- 24 Jackson. I am pleased to present this testimony
- on behalf of Mayor Jackson who serves the

- 1 citizens of the City of Cleveland, Ohio. The
- 2 city has a long history of voicing its supports
- 3 and concerns on public policy decisions that
- 4 affect its citizens and its own operations,
- 5 including a history before this Commission in
- 6 public hearings such as this. I appreciate the
- 7 Commission's consideration of the comments
- 8 presented today.
- 9 First, the city is pleased that the
- 10 Commission recently scheduled additional public
- 11 hearings in the evening for the greater
- 12 Cleveland area. Public hearings are the
- opportunity to be heard and to provide input on
- 14 matters that affect both citizens and
- 15 businesses. As noted by then Mayor George
- 16 Voinovich in 1981, a gas rate hearing that was
- very similar to this hearing, not everyone has
- 18 the ability to leave work in the middle of the
- 19 day or to travel great distances in order to
- 20 exercise this opportunity. Thus, scheduling
- 21 more hearings benefits the Commission by
- offering more robust opportunities for input as
- 23 we witness here today.
- 24 With regard to the substance of the
- Dominion East Ohio's request, the city's

- 1 concerns relates to increased costs for its
- 2 citizens, especially in light of today's
- 3 economic situation. These increased costs may
- 4 be in the form of a customer charge or rate
- 5 adjustment. With regard to customer charges,
- 6 the proposal to increase customer charges
- 7 approximately \$12 per month adds almost \$150 to
- 8 everybody customer's bill. For low-income
- 9 residents who qualify for HEAP assistance, this
- 10 increase effectively eliminates that assistance.
- 11 The city believes that this proposed increase is
- 12 not justified. The City also believes that
- 13 low-income customers should receive genuine
- 14 assistance that is meaningful to their quality
- 15 of life.
- 16 Finally, with regard to customer
- charges, the city believes that the proposed
- 18 1.5 percent late payment charge is not
- 19 reflective of any actual cost associates with
- 20 late payments and hurts those customers who most
- 21 are struggling to pay their high energy costs.
- With regard to rate adjustments, the city cannot
- 23 support any automatic rate increase that results
- 24 from decreased gas consumption primarily for two
- 25 reasons. First, the city is concerned with any

- 1 policy that contradicts energy conservation
- 2 efforts as we've heard this morning. Energy
- 3 conservation is both environmentally and
- 4 economically beneficial, and the proposal before
- 5 the Commission works against such conservation.
- 6 Automatic rate increases disincentivize
- 7 customers to weatherize their homes, to lower
- 8 their thermostats, or to invest in their
- 9 properties to maximize the energy efficiency.
- 10 Sustainability exists where three elements
- 11 intersect: Economic consideration,
- 12 environmental stewardship and social needs. The
- 13 current proposal is not sustainable.
- 14 Secondly, the city believes that the
- 15 rate adjustment should be made only in light of
- 16 the costs associated with providing the actual
- 17 service. Automatic rate increases do not
- 18 encourage Dominion East Ohio to decrease costs.
- 19 Moreover, they do not provide a mechanism
- whereby Dominion East Ohio would present its
- costs in the public setting prior to any rate
- 22 increases which would allow decreased costs to
- 23 factor into that rate equation. If Dominion
- 24 East Ohio's costs decrease, consumption
- 25 decreases, but the rate automatically increases,

- 1 then Dominion East Ohio realizes even more
- 2 profit on the backs of its customers. This is
- 3 an unacceptable result. Thank you for your
- 4 consideration of these policy issues. Your
- 5 decision will directly affect the lives of tens
- of thousands of people, many who live in the
- 7 greater Cleveland area. Thank you.
- 8 MS. PIRIK: Thank you. Justin
- 9 Reiter.
- 10 (Thereupon, Justin Reiter was sworn.)
- 11 MS. PIRIK: Please state your
- 12 name and address for the record.
- 13 MR. REITER: My name is Justin
- 14 Reiter, R-e-i-t-e-r, with the Cuyahoga County
- Department of Senior and Adult Services, 1701
- 16 East 12th Street, Reserve Square, Cleveland,
- 17 Ohio, 44114.
- Good afternoon. My name is Justin
- 19 Reiter, and I represent the Cuyahoga County
- 20 Department of Senior and Adult Services and the
- 21 senior citizens of Cuyahoga County. I am here
- 22 today to provide testimony regarding the Public
- 23 Utilities Commission of Ohio or PUCO
- 24 recommendation to increase the flat or base rate
- 25 service fee charged to customers receiving

- 1 natural gas from Dominion East Ohio. In August
- 2 2007 Dominion East Ohio filed with the PUCO a
- 3 request to increase its distribution charge
- 4 along with a rate increase by \$75 million a
- 5 year. The change to distribution cost would
- 6 result in an increase of 16.9 percent for
- 7 customers in the east region from its current
- 8 \$31.60 to a proposed \$36.94. For customers of
- 9 the west region, the change amounts to a
- 10 26.8 percent increase from the current rate of
- \$29.12 to a proposed \$36.94. Dominion has also
- 12 proposed that both the western and eastern
- 13 regions begin paying \$5.77 a month of a flat
- 14 rate service fee. It's important to note that
- 15 these increases do not include the actual cost
- of gas which varies subject to changes in the
- market price, a factor that has impacted the
- 18 cost of energy significantly over the last few
- 19 years. In addition to a rate change, Dominion
- 20 East Ohio has developed several projects,
- 21 including the 25-year \$2.6 billion pipeline
- 22 infrastructure project, and \$126.3 million
- 23 five-year plan to retrofit automated meter
- 24 reading devices to all 1.3 million gas meters in
- 25 its service territory, the cost of which will be

- 1 passed on to Dominion's customers. Dominion's
- 2 request to increase its service rate is not
- 3 unique. As energy costs have grown, major gas
- 4 utility providers in Ohio have filed requests to
- 5 increase its base rates citing a drastic chain
- 6 reduction in customer consumption and the fact
- 7 that profits are based solely on what is charged
- 8 as a base rate of service. However, the Ohio
- 9 Consumers' Counsel has argued that raising the
- 10 flat rate customer charge would significantly
- 11 change the rate structure and would negatively
- impact consumers who attempt to conserve energy.
- 13 The end result would be low-use customers
- 14 subsidizing high-use customers. In response to
- 15 the request, the PUCO recommended raising the
- base rate charge to \$17.50 for all of its
- 17 Dominion customers, tripling the rate customers
- 18 are charged while lowering the usage base charge
- 19 from the current \$1.24 per 1,000 cubic feet to
- just under .36 per MCF or metric cubic feet.
- 21 The justification behind this decision is based
- on efforts to lower administrative and filing
- 23 costs incurred when a utility company submits
- 24 requests for adjustments to rates. In the case
- of Dominion, the annual adjustment rate and

- 1 midyear changes would amount to continued costs
- 2 passed on to the consumer.
- For the past 30 or so years we've
- 4 been encouraged to conserve and become more
- 5 energy efficient for a variety of reasons. It
- 6 seems like a distinctive change to that message
- 7 when utility companies with the support of the
- 8 PUCO are refocusing on how they charge their
- 9 customers by putting more emphasis on the flat
- 10 fees that overlook consumption.
- 11 The Cleveland Plain Dealer reported
- in May that this winter's heating bills could
- jump from \$200 to \$400 depending primarily on
- 14 weather and gas commodity prices. At the same
- 15 time Dominion East Ohio has been raising the
- 2008-2009 budget amount for many of its
- 17 customers, some of whom are seeing their
- 18 budgeted bills double. Independent gas
- 19 marketeers serving more than two-thirds of
- 20 Dominion Ohio's residential customers are
- 21 following suit with one year fixed rate
- contracts that range between \$12.40 per 1,000
- 23 cubic feet to \$15.99 before taxes and three
- 24 dollar MCF delivery charge.
- The impact of the Public Utilities

- 1 Commission Ohio's recommendation to Dominion
- 2 East Ohio can best be reflected by looking at
- 3 the economic standing of the population that's
- 4 being served, in our case the senior citizens.
- 5 The most recent data comes from the United
- 6 States census bureau's 2006 American Community
- 7 Survey. According to their findings, Cuyahoga
- 8 County had a senior population 65 years and
- 9 older of 189,806. Of that population, 18,675
- 10 seniors or 9 percent were living at or below the
- 11 Federal poverty level or FPL. Another 48,313 or
- 12 25 percent were living between 100 and
- 13 200 percent of poverty. For that same time
- 14 period the City of Cleveland had a senior
- population of \$51,543. Of that population,
- 9,038 or 17.5 percent were living below the
- 17 Federal poverty level.
- To put these numbers in perspective,
- 19 the 2006 Federal poverty level for an individual
- 20 65 years and older was \$9,669. For a couple 65
- years and over, poverty was set at \$12,186. In
- 22 2008 the Federal poverty level for a single
- person living at 100 percent of poverty is
- \$10,400, and for a couple that figure is
- 25 \$14,000. Although the Federal poverty level is

- 1 increased on a yearly basis, the current economy
- 2 makes me believe that the financial struggles to
- 3 meet basic needs remain, especially when this
- 4 large increase was not even requested by
- 5 Dominion. To triple the flat rate fees being
- 6 charged to customers at this time seems
- 7 unreasonably burdensome. The proposed rate
- 8 increase coupled with the rising cost of energy
- 9 and other essentials weaken the ability of our
- 10 senior citizen community to remain independent.
- 11 I thank you for your time.
- 12 MS. PIRIK: Thank you.
- Dora McKeever?
- 14 (Thereupon, Dora McKeever was sworn.)
- 15 MS. PIRIK: Could you please
- 16 state your name spelling and address for the
- 17 record?
- MS. McKEEVER: It's Dora McKeever,
- 19 like Dora the Explorer. McKeever,
- 20 M-c-K-e-e-v-e-r. My address 11430 Clifton
- 21 Boulevard, Cleveland, 44102.
- 22 MS. PIRIK: You may proceed.
- MS. McKEEVER: Hi, everybody. I'm
- Dora McKeever. I'm 85 going on 86. It's hard.
- 25 I listened to the report that this one gentleman

- 1 just gave that was before me. He talked about
- 2 seniors. Some of the seniors are broken down
- 3 income level and how many seniors in this
- 4 category and that. One class of people who are
- 5 forgotten are the seniors who live in the 300
- 6 apartments in Cleveland under either CMHA or
- 7 landlord-based seniors. Now, while this issue
- 8 does not address the rate nor the distribution
- 9 of the natural gas, we could suffer in many
- 10 other ways. If the landlord doesn't put on the
- 11 heat or if you've got city inspectors which
- should be inspected, but there are some of the
- 13 real people that are causing a lot of the
- 14 building problems here because they do not care
- 15 how many windows they put in to let the heat out
- 16 and they get air coming into their apartments,
- they don't care about that. So we're not
- 18 talking here about the rate of the natural gas
- nor the distribution, we're talking here now
- 20 about a fee that is charged to everybody. What
- 21 disturbs me about all those people that live in
- 22 this housing whether or not if they have a
- 23 building, say, with 200 apartments, is the fee
- 24 that they're going to charge the landlord 200
- 25 apartments, one for each apartment, because they

- 1 are different households? That was never, ever
- 2 covered here, and you have to look between the
- 3 lines on that.
- 4 Now, if you're going to judge from
- 5 the \$4 to the \$17, those figures are not too
- 6 clear right now, that they want to charge and
- 7 rightly so. If they need to pay for
- 8 installation of this or have trouble to come
- 9 out, those fees have got to be taken care of.
- 10 Now, if you look at what this PUCO did pass,
- they are passing a bill which would probably
- 12 cause the special ticket that every customer has
- to pay probably about they say \$17. I was in an
- 14 RTA hearing. You know what it's going to cost a
- senior when they go up on their bill? They're
- 16 going to start charging them, say, instead of a
- 17 \$1.75 cents which they can get a pass on now to
- 18 get to go to the hospital that they don't
- 19 qualify really for parent transit because maybe
- 20 they make 10 bucks over that amount, so they
- 21 will have to pay at least \$30 per month with
- less income than people that the PUCO said they
- 23 would have to pay from \$4 to \$17. It looks like
- 24 an awful lot and I sympathize with them. On the
- other hand, if you look at the whole picture, in

- 1 my estimation, \$17 is a lot of money. However,
- what about bus fair and they're fighting about
- 3 the diesel -- they're using diesel instead of
- 4 gas. Those are going to go up. How is a senior
- 5 going to get to a hospital, to a doctor, to get
- 6 to grocery stores when the companies are moving
- 7 out of the districts where they live? They
- 8 don't want to go to a nursing home. If you
- 9 think you're going to drop us off in a nursing
- 10 home, you're all mistaken. We don't want to go
- 11 to a nursing home. We want to do what you're
- doing, coming to meetings and living normally.
- We do say that PUCO I don't think was
- 14 too bad in raising it from \$4 to \$17, although I
- wouldn't want to pay it. But if I have to pay
- 16 30 bucks for my transportation, if I have to pay
- four, five dollars for a gallon of milk, which
- 18 as you get older you have osteoporosis, those
- 19 things are what a lot of us should be thinking
- 20 about. I'm sorry for you. If my mother lived
- 21 at home, they're not asking for an increase in
- 22 the rate of the gas, natural gas nor the
- 23 distribution, they need to have that customer
- 24 service to take care of the things they need.
- Now, if the PUCO, and I'm sure that

- 1 they didn't do anything in disrespect, looked at
- 2 all the figures and figured out, well, they need
- 3 this much, this company needs this much, if East
- 4 Ohio files a case against the -- in order to get
- 5 more money to pay for bringing your gas or doing
- 6 other things, they have to figure whether or not
- 7 if they don't raise it, will they have enough to
- 8 operate. These people are investors. You have
- 9 to keep that in mind. It's sad, but you know
- what, when you're 85, you sort of forget when
- 11 things don't come your way, but you've got to
- 12 keep going.
- Now, to me I have to say I feel sorry
- 14 for the seniors. I think that maybe the poor
- people who live in those housing and cannot
- 16 afford the gasoline, that's what is really
- disturbing. A lot of these people -- you have
- 18 to consider East Ohio and other utility
- 19 companies, they have to deal with a lot of bad
- debts. People do things and they can't pay
- 21 their bill, therefore, it's going to cost more
- 22 to go out there, turn on the gas, turn it off,
- 23 customer calls, things like that. So I'm sort
- 24 of -- I can't completely go against the PUCO's
- 25 ruling, although to go up you have to understand

- 1 how it works. You're not paying for more gas,
- you're not paying for the distribution to bring
- 3 it there, you're paying for the other things.
- 4 If you're going to open up a business, you've
- 5 got to have everything to run that business.
- I hope I haven't turned you all away,
- 7 but I'm very -- I took a course in seniors,
- 8 gerontology, and I did learn this, if you don't
- 9 have empathy, that means you have a mental
- 10 disorder. Well, that's very hard not to say I
- don't understand you, but I've got to go little
- 12 bit along with charging a little more for
- 13 ticket, but maybe \$17 is a lot when you stop and
- 14 think about our -- this elderly lady talked
- about -- we did not get that much money this
- 16 time around in our social security, and the
- money now is hard for all of us.
- So I would say if they're going to do
- something, they could bring it down a little bit
- 20 or try to cut down on some of the things. They
- 21 do mention here what they have to pay for. If
- you have files, you've got to have files here,
- 23 for the infrastructure investments, things that
- 24 they come to you. These are only proposed rates
- 25 that they're talking about. But I'm with you

- 1 when you stop to think about how hard it's going
- 2 to be for everybody. I know because I'm
- 3 suffering too, but I just cut down my food and I
- 4 feel much better and I don't -- I can't eat what
- I wanted to eat, not the T-bone steak. I'm
- 6 saving money from AT&T lifeline. I save a lot
- 7 of money on AT&T's lifeline because I qualify
- 8 and others quality, and if you save a lot of
- 9 money you can buy a T-bone steak or a thick
- 10 porterhouse steak at the end of the year if you
- 11 save your savings. Save your savings. Do what
- we do in the second World War, go out and have a
- 13 garden in the back, do your greens. You can
- save money that way. That's all I've got to
- 15 say. Thanks for listening to me. I like to
- 16 talk a lot.
- 17 MS. PIRIK: Cindy is a member
- 18 of our staff and she's, along with Linda
- 19 Hamilton, in the back of the room. I know it's
- 20 difficult for everyone to get out today, and
- some individuals are interested in testifying
- 22 and other individuals -- I hate to lose anybody,
- 23 but I'm giving her a petition to sign that
- 24 basically states that you were present at
- 25 today's hearing and you're opposed to the

- 1 proposal for the reason expressed by those that
- 2 have already testified, so in the event that you
- 3 need to leave or you're not interested in
- 4 actually coming to the podium, I wanted to give
- 5 everyone the opportunity to sign the petition.
- 6 I will docket that in the record with today's
- 7 date and the fact that it goes with the
- 8 transcript for today, so Ms. Stewart and Ms.
- 9 Hamilton will have that in the back in case
- 10 anyone wants to sign that. In the meantime, we
- 11 will continue with testimony. Marie Rehmar.
- 12 (Thereupon, Marie Rehmar was sworn.)
- 13 MS. PIRIK: Please state your
- 14 name and spelling and address for the record.
- MS. REHMAR: Marie Rehmar,
- 16 M-a-r-i-e R-e-h-m-a-r, 4121 Hinsdale,
- 17 H-i-n-s-d-a-l-e Road, South Euclid, Ohio, 44121.
- I'm coming to speak as a resident. I
- 19 appreciate the opportunity for a hearing, and
- 20 I'm glad I had some vacation time to use to come
- 21 here. Regulatory matters can be very complex.
- 22 MS. PIRIK: They can't hear.
- 23 Hold it closer.
- MS. REHMAR: I'm here as a
- 25 resident, and I realize that regulatory matters

- 1 are kind of complex and that's why the residents
- of our state need to rely on the PUCO, so I'm
- 3 glad there is an opportunity for the hearing.
- 4 I'm also glad that the Ohio Consumers Counsel
- 5 exists to help get some information together. I
- 6 think that we had some information in the Plain
- 7 Dealer, and I did a little looking web-wise.
- 8 Some things aren't clear yet to me as far as
- 9 like the number of houses that have the new
- 10 pipes versus the old pipes, how many new meters
- 11 are needed, what kind of distances are we
- 12 talking about, and how it relates to staffing,
- 13 and, you know, we still have staff to consider
- 14 in the utilities and that is an important aspect
- 15 as well. So that and the fee information is
- something I think maybe there's more information
- 17 available.
- In regard to that construction
- 19 program, they mentioned \$1.12 per month first
- year, additional 90 cents per month each year
- 21 and I'm not certain whether that's included or
- 22 not included in this proposed rate increase,
- 23 but -- you know, so in terms of long-term, it
- looks like it will be less, but it's a little
- 25 unclear to me. So I guess I'm saying if it's

- 1 unclear to me, I'm possibly not the only one
- 2 around the state that finds it unclear.
- 3 I think that the proposed rate
- 4 structure looks like it penalizes the
- 5 individuals who purposely chose to live in
- 6 smaller houses or do without other things to
- 7 take care of their utility costs. And I very
- 8 much agree with the individual from the City of
- 9 Cleveland who was against the proposal that
- 10 disincentivizes conservation efforts. Now, I
- 11 guess I am surprised that the change would be
- 12 such a huge change in a rate structure as shown
- in the Plain Dealer August 2 chart, but I come
- 14 out as a typical user, and, okay, I care about
- 15 structural improvements, the infrastructure
- 16 safety matters. That is something important. I
- 17 realize there needs to be an increase if
- 18 infrastructure matters are worked on.
- 19 On the other hand, it does seem like
- 20 that's a pretty good jump over there. And
- 21 usually when things like taxation or other
- 22 public matters are talked about, there's a
- 23 progressive and regressive aspect that is
- 24 discussed, and this chart looks to me like the
- 25 individuals using the smaller amounts are going

- 1 to be hit with an amazingly big difference for
- 2 the new costs, and I just think that in looking
- 3 at Ohio as a whole, that's a definite concern to
- 4 me.
- 5 Now, another item, I also agree with
- 6 the comment made earlier regarding the income
- 7 levels of the corporate management, and that's
- 8 something that I think should be considered as
- 9 well. I get a raise. A lot of people do get
- 10 raises around the state, but my raise is not
- anywhere near the raises that were discussed
- 12 earlier. Also, with these expenses, it's my
- understanding expenses are supposed to come
- 14 before profits, and I noticed that there was a
- 15 stock split that happened in '97, November 19,
- 16 '97. It was a chart, historical stock splits.
- and dividends, updated June 12, 2008, and it
- 18 looks like the per share item before was .710,
- 19 then afterwards it's .395. So .395 times two
- seems to be more than .710. Everyone is having
- 21 a little bit of a rougher time right now and I'm
- 22 concerned about you know that area as well.
- 23 Another item is if part of the
- 24 proposal is to deal with properties going
- 25 through foreclosures and bank ownerships,

- 1 et cetera, I wonder if there is, perhaps, some
- 2 other way of working out details and relating
- 3 it -- seeing if municipalities or other
- 4 organizations or if there are some other ways
- 5 for working out in some newer manner for this
- 6 problem. It's not just local, but maybe there's
- 7 a way we can be a model for handling the
- 8 utilities aspects for this foreclosure and sub
- 9 prime problem.
- 10 So I think those are the most --
- 11 those are the items that I thought I'd mention.
- 12 I guess I just wanted to be a person very
- 13 concerned about this, and I appreciate whatever
- 14 educational efforts are made to help the
- ordinary person understand these complex
- 16 matters, and I appreciate the PUCO caring about
- the ordinary person, and particularly the ones
- 18 that are having extra problems on the income
- 19 front at present. Thank you.
- MS. PIRIK: I would say, too, I
- 21 know that sometimes reading applications like
- 22 this are very confusing. There are some
- 23 individuals here from the company. You may want
- 24 to approach them and ask them specific questions
- 25 about the application because it sounds like

- 1 you're very well educated about the application
- 2 and that they may be able to help clarify some
- 3 of their requests. Thank you.
- 4 Tom Mendelsohn.
- 5 (Thereupon, Tom Mendelsohn was
- 6 sworn.)
- 7 MR. MENDELSOHN: My name is spelled
- 8 M-e-n-d-e-l-s-o-h-n. I'm working at the
- 9 Empowerment Center of Greater Cleveland,
- 10 formerly the Welfare Rights Organization, and
- 11 that address is 3030 Euclid Avenue, Suite 100.
- 12 I thank you for giving me the opportunity to
- 13 speak briefly to you this afternoon.
- 14 Actually, our group is a part of a
- 15 coalition that works together on issues that
- 16 relate to utilities, and so we're just really
- one of the groups from this coalition. Others
- 18 are the Citizens For Fair Utility Rates,
- 19 Neighborhood Environmental Coalition, and our
- 20 organization, the Empowerment Center. I'd like
- 21 to say this, I'd like to say that the rate
- increase seems appropriate, but it doesn't,
- 23 especially since it's two or three times what
- 24 the utility company was asking for, at least in
- 25 the information that I have. Also, it appears

- 1 that by increasing the charge from five dollars
- 2 to \$17.50, the increase kind of is a way of
- 3 subsidizing the HEAP program which is already a
- 4 subsidy, so it just passes on the cost of that
- 5 subsidy to other groups who have other income
- 6 related things and other things on their list of
- 7 things that they need to cover for their own
- 8 families, so it's not exactly fair to pass it on
- 9 in that regard.
- I think there's a need to repair
- 11 utility access and egress with the pipes and
- 12 things like that, but I have to tell you that
- 13 oftentimes it becomes an extremely cumbersome
- 14 process to do that, and I'm speaking from my own
- 15 personal residential experience, so I think it's
- 16 time for Dominion East Ohio to take a look at
- how efficiently they do things, and how tough
- 18 they are on the customers when there is an issue
- 19 that's at hand.
- The one thing that really struck me,
- 21 and I -- when I was asked to speak, I have Latin
- language training in my background, so I
- 23 sometimes go to a derivative of a word just like
- 24 they do in the spelling bees. When I think of
- 25 Dominion as a derivative word, dominus comes to

- 1 my mind in terms of spiritual. But there's also
- 2 dominos which is a game that you can play a
- 3 number of different ways and it involves a
- 4 domino effect. And in the work that we do at
- 5 the Empowerment Center at Greater Cleveland, we
- 6 see all sorts of different aspects that deal
- 7 with energy. On the one hand, somebody will
- 8 come in and say, "I don't have enough money for
- 9 food. Can you help me access food stamps, or
- 10 can you direct me to a food pantry," and on the
- 11 other hand we're told they don't qualify for
- 12 prevention and retention and contingency
- dollars, and as a result they've had to attach
- 14 an extension cord to a very nice neighbor who
- 15 has allowed them to plug into their sockets or
- 16 their utilities or help or help with their type
- of thing, and this is not related to Dominion
- 18 East Ohio, but it's just an example of the
- 19 problems that people face with utilities.
- 20 Somebody might have a medical reason, might need
- 21 to have their gas functional, might not have
- 22 enough money to cover that, and then adding
- 23 these additional surcharges to it make for a lot
- of different problems. And so if we're going to
- 25 challenge the HEAP program, if we're going to

- 1 take funding away from people that generally
- 2 like to try to help other people that are in
- need by increasing their fees, I think that
- 4 we're not really taking a good close look at the
- 5 dichotomy that exists between what our energy
- 6 needs are, what the people's needs are, and how
- 7 do we best fit everything in between all of
- 8 those different parties. And I know this sounds
- 9 more philosophical than numerical and financial,
- 10 but I think that philosophically to try to
- increase something as much as is being
- 12 recommended doesn't make a lot of sense. Maybe
- in smaller increments we might be able to do
- 14 something and I think it will hurt less people
- 15 that way. So I thank you very much and look
- 16 forward to hearing more.
- 17 MS. PIRIK: Thank you.
- 18 Craig Strong.
- 19 (Thereupon, Craig Strong was sworn.)
- 20 MS. PIRIK: Please state your
- 21 name and address for the record.
- 22 MR. STRONG: Craig Strong,
- 23 S-t-r-o-n-g, 13715 Ardoon, A-r-d-o-o-n.
- I think it's just about all been said
- 25 almost. I would hasten to add if anyone were to

- 1 come up and say they were for this increase,
- 2 most of you in this room would probably take
- 3 them out back. I think the third person before
- 4 and Ms. McKeever, I think she hit one of the
- 5 nails on the head, especially when it comes to
- 6 senior citizens because their income is fixed
- 7 and that is a big concern. Now, the deadbeats,
- 8 I have a hard time being too concerned about
- 9 them. They were deadbeats when they were in
- 10 high school. They didn't pay back people who
- 11 loaned them lunch money, so I get a little bit
- 12 upset with that approach being concerned about
- 13 people that don't pay their bills. I say to
- 14 East Ohio Gas, shut off the gas to the
- 15 deadbeats.
- I think the PUCO may not be taking a
- 17 look at the big picture. What's the big
- 18 picture? A lot of people are being laid off,
- 19 RTA is going up, gasoline is very expensive in
- 20 terms of your automobile. So when you start to
- look, are we going to okay this or not going to
- 22 okay it? I question if you're taking a look at
- 23 the big picture, the overall picture as such.
- 24 In the end, I don't remember a time -- can you
- 25 recall a time that the PUCO turned down a

- 1 request like this? Does anyone want to
- 2 speak for East Ohio Gas? Have you always been
- 3 given everything you ask for? You guys are
- 4 smiling at me, but I'm asking a direct question.
- 5 MR. MURPHY: No.
- 6 MR. STRONG: You were turned
- 7 down when, a couple years ago?
- 8 MR. MURPHY: Our last rate
- 9 increase was in 1993.
- 10 MR. STRONG: I hope the PUCO
- 11 recognizes that things have changed. Even as
- 12 you move from 358.86 to 412.91, which is a
- 13 \$54.05 increase for a lot of people, for a lot
- of people.
- 15 Let me give you the spike in the
- 16 heart that really hurts. I think the PUCO
- 17 should put out a little note with Dominion Gas
- 18 that says, "Don't bother to save, don't bother
- 19 to turn your thermostat down, don't bother to
- wear a sweater, don't bother to put an extra
- quilt on the bed because it won't do you any
- good. Why bother? Just turn the gas up.
- 23 They're going to charge you anyway, period."
- 24 That's the sadness of what Dominion is asking
- 25 for, no matter what we do in terms of trying to

- 1 conserve, we're still going to get beat up,
- 2 period.
- I want to thank you for this
- 4 opportunity.
- 5 MS. PIRIK: Thank you.
- 6 (Thereupon, Siobhan Dubin was sworn.)
- 7 MS. PIRIK: Could you please
- 8 state your name and spelling and address for the
- 9 record?
- 10 MS. DUBIN: My name is Siobhan
- 11 Dubin, S-i-o-b-h-a-n D-u-b-i-n, 2021 Atkins
- 12 Avenue, Apartment 6, Lakewood, Ohio, 44107. I'd
- 13 like to speak about the disproportionate impact
- 14 it will pose on renters. I don't know if anyone
- 15 has really addressed that so far.
- 16 I've made a choice to economize by
- 17 living in rental housing where heat is included
- in the price of my rent. Most of the people in
- 19 my building are seniors and people with
- 20 disabilities who are also living on fixed
- incomes, as well as students and young people
- 22 like me with students loans and other bills to
- pay, and I think we're being disproportionately
- 24 affected by this increase because at the moment,
- for example, people in my building pay between

- 1 two and three dollars a month for gas usage, but
- 2 with service charge, that's eight or nine
- 3 dollars, and our gas bill will almost triple,
- 4 although we're using very little gas compared to
- 5 people who live in a house. I think we're
- 6 subsidizing people who have made bad energy
- 7 choices by living in larger homes and it's very
- 8 unfair. There is absolutely no reason why
- 9 anyone should conserve if the increase goes
- 10 through. There's no incentive to cut down your
- 11 usage if you're already paying that much money.
- 12 That was my main point, that I hope that the
- 13 committee will consider the impact on people who
- 14 rent as well as the -- I've heard it argued that
- some people pay less because the rate is going
- down, but that won't have an effect on people
- 17 like me. Thank you very much for the
- 18 opportunity to speak.
- 19 MS. PIRIK: Thank you.
- 20 Darrell -- I believe it's Darrell.
- 21 It starts with a "K".
- Weber.
- The next person is Walter.
- 24 (Thereupon, Walter Ciszkewycz was
- 25 sworn.)

1 Could you please MS. PIRIK: 2 state your name and address for the record? 3 My name is Walter, MR. CISZKEWYCZ: 4 W-a-1-t-e-r. Last name is Ciszkewycz, 5 C-i-s-z-k-e-w-y-c-z. I live at 281 East 6 Pleasant Valley Road, Seven Hills, Ohio, 44131. I'm a homeowner. I bought the house 8 approximately 25 years ago. I was also a small 9 business owner until a couple months ago. 10 finally was able to afford to replace my 11 furnace, get a more efficient one, put 12 insulation in the attic which cost me almost 13 \$2,000, and then I get real nice cut from the 14 government saying you saved \$500 on spending 15 over \$6,000 to do all this. Wow, that really 16 helped a lot. The problem is we're told to 17 conserve energy, make sure that you don't use as 18 much because it helps us in the future, and then 19 the companies come along and say, "We're sorry, 20 we didn't make enough money last year, we need 21 to raise the rates." 22 Now, tell me how many of you can go 23 to your boss and go, "Listen, I didn't make 24 enough money this year so you're going to pay me 25 more money so I can make more money."

- 1 He's going to say, "Have a nice day;
- 2 you don't work here anymore." My business
- 3 closed because economy sucks, to put it bluntly.
- 4 People lost jobs, I got less business, I
- 5 couldn't raise the rates because I'm competing
- 6 against somebody else, I couldn't afford to do
- 7 it, so I closed. But the main thing here is
- 8 this: At this moment, \$5.70 for the service
- 9 charge at an amount of 1.2 million customers
- 10 that the companies have, they're getting
- 11 \$6,840,000 a month, which comes out to
- 12 \$82,080,000 a year.
- At \$17.50 per 1.2 million customers,
- that's an increase up to \$21 million a month and
- 15 \$252 million a year. That's an increase of
- 16 \$169,920,000 a year.
- Now, if something goes wrong in my
- 18 house, I have to pay for it. If something goes
- 19 wrong in my business, I have to pay for it. I
- 20 cannot turn around and tell the next customer,
- "I have to charge you more because this broke so
- I have to charge you more." You guys have to
- learn how to deal with it and how to deal better
- 24 with this. You guys pay too much to your
- 25 presidents. Come on, 50, 60 million a year for

- the guy to turn around and go, "You're fired, I
- 2 don't want you anymore." That's ridiculous.
- 3 You know that in ten years that I had my
- 4 business, I didn't get one raise. In fact, all
- 5 my money went back into my business so it could
- 6 survive. I can't charge anybody extra for that.
- 7 I lost money. That was part of my deal. That's
- 8 what happened. But as far as charging this much
- 9 money for an infrastructure that you guys should
- 10 be taking care of from the beginning, this tells
- 11 me that you guys didn't take care of it and
- 12 you're waiting, and you're waiting until
- 13 something goes wrong and then you come here and
- 14 ask us for more money. And the people are
- 15 right, there are senior citizens that cannot
- 16 afford. They're getting hit with the school
- 17 system that wants more money for the schools.
- 18 They're getting hit with gas that they can't
- 19 afford, getting hit with their mortgages,
- 20 property taxes going up. I'm fortunate my
- 21 mother lives with us. If she didn't, I'd hate
- 22 to find out what she'd be going through. But to
- 23 have a person decide whether they want to buy
- 24 food or they want to buy medicine or do they
- 25 have to pay the gas company more money, guess

- 1 what, the gas company wins, they get the more
- 2 money and the person has to decide, do I take
- 3 pills so I can live longer or do I eat so I can
- 4 live longer? It's a no win situation. You
- 5 know, everybody is helping everybody else, but
- 6 the consumer is not getting the help they should
- 7 be getting.
- I thank you for your time, and I hope
- 9 you guys do the right thing.
- 10 MS. PIRIK: Thank you.
- 11 Liz Hernandez.
- 12 (Thereupon, Liz Hernandez was sworn.)
- 13 MS. PIRIK: Please state your
- 14 name and address for the record.
- 15 MS. HERNANDEZ: Liz Hernandez,
- 16 H-e-r-n-a-n-d-e-z, Cleveland Housing Network,
- 17 2999 Payne Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio, 44114.
- Dominion East Ohio has funded a
- 19 weatherization program "Housewarming" since
- 20 1987, which resulted from a rate case
- 21 settlement. For the past 20 years, Cleveland
- 22 Housing Network has been the administrator of
- 23 the program, working with a wide network of
- 24 community development corporation to effectively
- 25 deliver the services throughout Dominion

- 1 territory. Cleveland Housing Network has worked
- with Dominion to continually fine-tune and
- 3 improve the services and hopes to continue its
- 4 long and productive relationship. It is an
- 5 example of a partnership which works.
- 6 The Housewarming program has had
- 7 consistent funding of 3.5 million over the past
- 8 five years. The program reaches 1,500
- 9 low-income customers on an annual basis
- 10 providing insulation, furnace repair or
- 11 replacement, carbon monoxide detectors and air
- 12 leakage work in order to decrease the
- 13 consumption of the qualifying low-income client.
- Over the years, under CHN's direction
- and with the guidance and cooperation from
- 16 Dominion, the Housewarming program has developed
- its model to become more comprehensive, moving
- 18 towards technical standards that the state Home
- 19 Weatherization Assistance Program have developed
- 20 and standardized and that are widely regarded as
- 21 state-of-the-art in the energy conservation
- 22 world.
- 23 CHN has encouraged collaboration with
- other utility programs, such as First Energy
- 25 Program, the Cleveland Public power program, and

- 1 the City of Cleveland water program as well as
- 2 the Home Weatherization Assistance Program to
- 3 maximize the energy savings and more cost
- 4 effectively deliver all. Leveraged funds over
- 5 the past 20 years could amount to \$20 million or
- 6 more, and represent a delivery system that is
- 7 efficient and effective impacting gas, electric
- 8 and water consumption.
- In addition to the direct benefit to
- 10 the customer in energy terms, Housewarming also
- impacts the safety of their household, as
- 12 Housewarming provides funding for carbon
- monoxide detectors, the replacement of faulty
- 14 and dangerous furnaces, as well as correction of
- chimney problems, which if not corrected could
- 16 be fatal to the resident. Housewarming
- inspectors have encountered many of these
- situations over the years and the program has
- 19 saved lives.
- As I previously mentioned, funding
- 21 has been fairly consistent and has given the
- 22 network of Housewarming providers a means to
- 23 service those in need. However, the need
- 24 outweighs the funding level. The program is
- designed to service households falling under 150

- 1 percent of federal income poverty guidelines.
- 2 For a family of four, the guideline is \$31,000
- per year. For a household of one, it's \$15,600
- 4 per year. We have all noticed the state of the
- 5 economy in Ohio and throughout the country.
- 6 Social service agencies can tell you that the
- 7 need is growing. Statistics show us that the
- 8 number of families that fall in the 150 percent
- 9 guidelines is also growing. Many are elderly
- 10 and disabled. And then there are the families
- 11 that fall outside these guidelines who are
- 12 barely making it and cannot qualify for energy
- assistance towards their bill or a conservation
- 14 program.
- This is all to say that the
- 16 Housewarming program is currently stretched
- 17 beyond its funding limits. The territory has
- greatly expanded, yet the funding has not.
- 19 Presently the funding covers areas such as
- 20 Canton, Barberton, Akron, Youngstown, Ashtabula,
- 21 Painesville, the City of Cleveland, inner ring
- 22 suburbs, and territory throughout the state,
- 23 including down to Marietta. There are many
- 24 other communities not mentioned as it would take
- 25 too long to even list. But the point is that

- 1 these areas are hurting economically and the
- 2 funding level needs to be dramatically increased
- 3 to come close to serving the customers who need
- 4 these services. Our experience is that
- 5 low-income customers want to conserve, however,
- 6 many live in homes that are older and leakier
- 7 than other customers. It takes careful
- 8 assessments and adequate funding to cost
- 9 effectively impact the energy consumption and
- 10 the gas bill.
- The funding level needs to come
- 12 closer to \$10 million per year in order to
- 13 adequately fund the current and foreseeable need
- 14 to reach the customers needing the services.
- 15 Cleveland Housing Network is looking towards the
- 16 future of Housewarming which would include:
- 17 Full adoption of the technical standards
- developed by the Ohio Energy Office,
- 19 certification of all contractors and inspectors
- 20 which may require additional coursework and
- 21 training in house diagnostics, furnace
- 22 inspection, and ongoing energy related
- 23 coursework, which we are committed to doing.
- 24 We've already begun discussions with this regard
- with the Ohio Weatherization Training Center.

- 1 Increased level of funding, as I mentioned
- 2 before, closer to \$10 million. Expanding the
- 3 reach of the program to a higher number of
- 4 customers. And also a demand side management
- 5 component to offer similar services to all
- 6 classes of residential customers, not strictly
- 7 low income. The program design could feature
- 8 very low interest loans, rebates to customers to
- 9 help offset the cost of an energy audit for
- 10 energy efficiency upgrades. There are some
- designs for demand side management programs that
- 12 could easily be implemented as all consumers
- 13 face the struggles of a gas bill and higher
- 14 costs of living in general.
- 15 Cleveland Housing Network also
- 16 administers a fuel fund for bill payment
- 17 assistance, funded with Dominion dollars, which
- 18 will expire this year. It provided
- 19 approximately \$137,000, with only a 10 percent
- 20 administrative fee. CHN works with clients and
- 21 other emergency funding sources to stretch these
- 22 dollars in order to maximize the number of
- 23 clients it can benefit. It is for some the only
- 24 way they can keep their utilities on. It is a
- 25 last resort emergency fund. Since CHN also is

- 1 involved in the administration of emergency HEAP
- dollars, the staff is able to most effectively
- 3 work out these payments plans with the utility
- 4 companies and the client. It is our
- 5 recommendation that the fuel fund be
- 6 consolidated, and, thus, more cost effectively
- 7 coordinated to complement the emergency HEAP
- 8 network. It is unfair to families in crisis to
- 9 have to chase down the emergency dollars that
- 10 are available by going around to other agencies
- who are involved with Dominion fuel fund
- 12 dollars, such as Energy Share.
- In closing, I ask the Commission to
- 14 look at the enormous multiple benefits of the
- 15 Housewarming program and support its expansion,
- 16 as well as funding for demand side management
- 17 programs which can assist the struggling
- 18 customers who are outside the income limits of
- 19 the Housewarming program.
- Lastly, to drive home the points
- 21 regarding the clients' needs, I offer the
- 22 following excerpts from letters received by CHN.
- "To Ohio Department of Development, Cleveland
- 24 Housing Network, Housewarming Program."
- 25 "We wanted to write a letter of

- 1 sincere gratitude. This program has made it
- 2 possible for our household to stay warm and not
- 3 pay an extraordinary amount in energy bills. We
- 4 have already seen a huge drop in the amount of
- 5 energy consumption for last and this month, and
- 6 we are sure it will continue throughout the
- 7 entire winter season."
- 8 And one more.
- 9 "To Whom It May Concern: I am
- 10 writing to express my deep appreciation for your
- 11 assistance in having my house weatherized. I am
- 12 very grateful to you for providing the funds for
- 13 a new furnace as well as complete insulation. I
- 14 promise to think of you each time I receive a
- 15 gas bill."
- 16 MS. PIRIK: Jim Zales.
- 17 (Thereupon, Jim Zales was sworn.)
- 18 MR. ZALES: Jim Zales, 18903
- 19 Nottingham Road, Cleveland.
- Who represents the PUCO?
- 21 MS. PIRIK: I do.
- 22 MR. ZALES: You're the only one
- 23 that showed up?
- 24 MS. PIRIK: I'm an attorney in
- 25 the legal department and I'm the hearing

- 1 officer, so it's an administrative hearing.
- 2 MR. ZALES: The main guys don't
- 3 bother coming to these then?
- 4 MS. PIRIK: No. They read the
- 5 transcript and it's all summarized for them and
- 6 they have it all before them.
- 7 MR. ZALES: They usually don't
- 8 like to face the people, do they, but they'll
- 9 have plenty of private meetings with the
- 10 corporate executives.
- 11 MS. PIRIK: Would you like to
- 12 give some testimony today?
- 13 MR. ZALES: How much do the
- 14 PUCO members get paid per year?
- MS. PIRIK: We're here to have
- 16 testimony with regard to the Dominion rate case.
- 17 Do you have any comments with regard to that
- 18 rate case?
- 19 MR. ZALES: Sure. Dominion is
- 20 a Virginia corporation. They used to have
- offices at 9th and St. Clair where you could go
- 22 and pay your bill and talk to people, but they
- 23 closed all that down and moved it out with a lot
- of other services. They're a monopoly, which
- everybody knows, but we have another company

- 1 called Columbia Gas. I'd like to ask the lady
- 2 from PUCO why is Columbia Gas rates figured
- 3 different from Dominion?
- 4 MS. PIRIK: Actually, this
- 5 isn't an opportunity to ask questions as much as
- 6 to give information.
- 7 MR. ZALES: Just a thought I
- 8 had. So I can't talk about the PUCO at all?
- 9 MS. PIRIK: You can give
- 10 testimony with regard to the Dominion rate case.
- 11 That's what we're here to hear about today.
- MR. ZALES: Well, it seems on
- 13 me Mr. Strickland appointed the same guys in the
- 14 PUCO and it seems to be the same policies
- 15 happening continuously. I think the PUCO is due
- 16 for a change.
- 17 But this automated meter reading that
- 18 they want the increase for, see, they only tell
- 19 you half truths. They don't tell you how much
- 20 money they're going to save by doing this, do
- 21 they? They only tell you the costs. So they
- 22 ought to give you the whole picture, not just
- 23 the part picture. And I don't think -- I know
- 24 I'm not supposed to talk about the PUCO, but
- 25 they're not fair in this situation. I think

- 1 they're leaning toward the corporate side rather
- 2 than the public side when they propose these
- 3 type of rates. I think just like the water
- 4 department, the sewer department, they're all
- 5 nonprofits. Why can't we make this -- gas a
- 6 nonprofit just like we have the water, sewer,
- 7 et cetera? Why should they be quaranteed extra
- 8 high profits without even checking their figures
- 9 what they're asking for? That's all I have.
- 10 MS. PIRIK: Thank you. The
- 11 last individual I have on this list is T-h --
- 12 (Thereupon, Thomas Sheehan was
- sworn.)
- 14 MS. PIRIK: State your name and
- 15 spelling for the record.
- 16 MR. SHEEHAN: Thomas, Sheehan,
- 17 S-h-e-e-h-a-n. The address is 1373 Gladys
- 18 Avenue, Lakewood, Ohio, 44107.
- 19 I just want to say a couple words
- 20 that's already been said. You know, last winter
- 21 we were very cold, but we wore sweaters and kept
- our bill reasonably low, kind of low anyway.
- 23 But this winter we can keep the heat low, but
- 24 we'll have higher bills. And we're told
- 25 conservation is the way to go, but this proposal

- 1 is counter to that and I just wanted to say
- 2 that. Thank you for your time.
- 3 MS. PIRIK: Thank you.
- 4 That completes the list of people who
- 5 had signed up. Is there anyone in the audience
- 6 who would like to testify at this time? I will
- 7 take individuals.
- 8 (Thereupon, Ray Rosenberger was
- 9 sworn.)
- 10 MS. PIRIK: Could you state
- 11 your name and spelling and address for the
- 12 record?
- 13 MR. ROSENBERGER: Yes. My name is
- 14 Ray Rosenberger, last name spelled
- 15 R-o-s-e-n-b-e-r-g-e-r. My address is 6232 North
- 16 Canterbury Road, Parma, Ohio.
- 17 Everything I was going to say has
- 18 already mostly been said. I am opposed to the
- 19 granting of the rate increase, not because of
- 20 what it is or the amount, but the manner in
- which it's being done. We are entering a
- 22 completely new era of energy consumption, and
- 23 not only the consumption, but the effect that
- 24 that energy consumption has on our environment,
- 25 and I would urge the PUCO to come up with a new

- 1 template that meets the needs of the future.
- We've been using the same method of going
- 3 through rate applications and rate increases,
- 4 and I think maybe the energy companies would
- 5 enjoy or entertain the possibility of doing it
- 6 in a way that recognizes the future, and so
- 7 that's why I'm opposed to it.
- 8 I also wanted to make a comment with
- 9 regards to the public hearing itself. And if
- 10 the purpose is to gather input, then, perhaps,
- 11 there's a better format in which to do this. I
- 12 heard a number before mentioned of one million
- 13 customers, and I really don't know the number of
- 14 customers that were out there, but there is a
- document, a vehicle called a statistically valid
- 16 survey which would accurately let you see the
- 17 attitudes and opinions of those that are
- involved in the rate increase. Thank you.
- 19 MS. PIRIK: Thank you.
- Is there anyone else who would like
- 21 to testify? Feel free to raise your hand. We'd
- like to hear anyone who has anything they'd like
- 23 to say.
- Seeing none, I would like to thank
- 25 everyone for coming. This public hearing is

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just a piece of information that the Commission
     uses to make their decision. They have not made
 3
     their decision yet. Once all the record is
     complete, they will have a recommendation and
 4
     they will make their decision at that time.
 5
     That being said, this hearing is adjourned.
 6
     Thank you.
                (Thereupon, the proceedings were
                concluded at 2:10 o'clock p.m.)
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     STATE OF OHIO,
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                          SS:
     SUMMIT COUNTY,
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 5
         I, Stephanie R. Dean, Court Reporter and
 6
     Notary Public within and for the State of Ohio,
     duly commissioned and qualified, do hereby
 7
     certify that these proceedings were taken by me
     and reduced to Stenotypy, afterwards prepared
     and produced by means of Computer-Aided
     Transcription and that the foregoing is a true
 9
     and correct transcription of the proceedings so
     taken as aforesaid.
10
          I do further certify that these proceedings
     were taken at the time and place in the
11
     foregoing caption specified.
          I do further certify that I am not a
12
     relative, employee of or attorney for any party
     or counsel, or otherwise financially interested
13
     in this action.
         I do further certify that I am not, nor is
14
     the court reporting firm with which I am
     affiliated, under a contract as defined in Civil
15
     Rule 28(D).
          IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my
16
     hand and affixed my seal of office at Akron,
     Ohio on this 13th day of August, 2008.
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23
          My commission expires August 30, 2010.
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DENNIS J. KUCINICH

10th District, Ohio

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Congress of the United States Kouse of Representatives

CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON DOMESTIC POLICY

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND

GOVERNMENT REFORM

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND LABOR

www.kucinich.house.gov

August 4, 2008

Mr. Alan R. Schriber Chairman Public Utilities Commission Of Ohio 180 E Broad St Columbus, Ohio 43215-3705

Dear Chairman Schriber:

I strongly oppose Dominion East Ohio's proposed rate increases, which, if approved, will cost Ohioans nearly \$100 million more per year. I ask that you reject any attempt on the part of Dominion to downplay its strong financial standing and outlook in an effort to rationalize rate increases which would, according to its own 2007 annual report, "support a 12% return on equity."

In 2007, Dominion, the parent company of Dominion East Ohio, posted a net income of \$2.5 billion, an 84% increase from the year before and a 240% increase from 2005.

While the report issued by your staff correctly denies Dominion East Ohio's proposed 7% rate hike for usage, which totals approximately \$75 million annually, it replaces this request with an approximate 4% increase through inflating the fixed distribution rate. It straps a disproportional burden on the backs of those consumers who have chosen to conserve, many of whom are low-income. An additional \$12 per month charge before gas even begins to flow would be detrimental to many.

Dominion will tell you that its operating, material, maintenance, and fuel costs have increased in the past several years and months. What they won't tell you is that the cost-of-living for the average consumer has increased substantially as well over the same period of time. Electric prices are up; gasoline prices are through the roof; prescription drug prices are up; grocery prices are up. A seemingly modest natural gas bill increase could lead to low-income individuals and families having to choose between groceries, prescription drugs, or transportation in the winter months ahead.

Over 15,500 homeowners in Cuyahoga County fell victim to foreclosure in 2007. Early numbers for 2008 suggest this trend is only worsening. High utility bills were undoubtedly a contributing factor. Such an increase would contribute to additional foreclosures in the future.





For those with a natural gas furnace, natural gas is a basic necessity. Payment is not optional. Rate hikes like this hit hardest those who are already living at the edge of their means. We must not let Dominion dump its purported costs onto low-income and fixed income people like seniors, while Dominion continues to rack up profits.

According to the publication *BusinessWeek*, the President and CEO of Dominion received a total calculated compensation of \$15,118,207 in 2007. This amount represents an average of 39% of the annual increase for customers of Dominion East Ohio which the PUCO staff recommended.

In addition, the proposed distribution rate increase does not even fully take into consideration millions of dollars in increased costs that consumers will face if the proposed \$2.6 billion 25-year Pipeline Infrastructure Replacement plan, or the \$126 million automated meter reading device plan, is approved in this case. Such programs will increase profit for Dominion in the long-run through increasing consistency of customer use and operational efficiency, respectively. Dominion should invest on its own in these programs without passing the costs onto consumers. PUCO approval of such charges to be passed on to customers will mean short-term consumer investment in Dominion's long-term profit margin.

I thank you for holding a series of public hearings on this important issue, including this one here in Cleveland. I respectfully remind you that the reason for the PUCO's existence is to ensure that adequate consumer protections are in place. A decision to allow Dominion East Ohio to raise its rates in response to its alleged increases in costs would be a slap in the face to millions of consumers who are facing more and more increased costs of their own everyday.

The PUCO should seize this vital opportunity to protect the public from any proposed rate increases by Dominion East Ohio.

Sincerely,

Dennis J. Kucinich Member of Congress

ennis J. Kucinick

DJK:si



Cleveland City Hall 601 Lakeside Avenue, Room 202 Cleveland, Ohio 44114 (216) 664-3544

Dominion East Ohio Proposed Rate Increase
Testimony
Presented on Behalf of the
City of Cleveland
By its Chief of Government Affairs Valarie McCall

AUGUST 4, 2008

Good afternoon. My name is Valarie McCall, and I am Chief of Government Affairs for the City of Cleveland, Mayor Frank G. Jackson. I am pleased to present this testimony on behalf of Mayor Jackson, who serves the citizens of the City of Cleveland, Ohio. The City has a long history of voicing its support and concerns on public policy decisions that affect its citizens and its own operations, including a history before this Commission in public hearings such as this. I appreciate the Commission's consideration of the comments presented today.

First, the City is pleased that the Commission scheduled additional public hearings in the evening for the Greater Cleveland area. Public Hearings are about the *opportunity* to be heard and to provide input on matters that affect citizens and businesses. As noted by then Mayor George Voinovich in 1981 in a gas rate hearing that was very similar to this hearing, not everyone has the

ability to leave work in the middle of the day or travel great distances in order to exercise this opportunity. Thus, scheduling more hearings benefits the Commission by offering more robust opportunities for input.

With regard to the substance of Dominion East Ohio's request, the City's concerns relate to increased costs for its citizens, especially in light of today's economic situation. These increased costs may be in the form of a customer charges or rate adjustments.

With regard to customer charges, the proposal to increase customer charges approximately \$12 per month adds almost \$150 to every customer's bill. For low income customers who qualify for HEAP assistance, this increase effectively eliminates that assistance. The City believes that this proposed increase is not justified. The City also believes that low income customers should receive genuine assistance that is meaningful to their quality of life. Finally, with regard to customer charges, the City believes that the proposed 1.5% late payment charge is not reflective of any actual cost associated with late payments, and hurts those customers most who are struggling to pay high energy costs.

With regard to rate adjustments, the City cannot support any automatic rate increase that results from decreased gas consumption, primarily for two reasons. First, the City is concerned with any policy that *contradicts* energy

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conservation efforts. Energy conservation is both environmentally and economically beneficial, and the proposal before the Commission works against such conservation. Automatic rate increases disincentive customers to weatherize, lower their thermostats, or invest in their property to maximize energy efficiency. Sustainability exists where three elements intersect: economic consideration, environmental stewardship, and social needs. The current proposal is not Sustainable.

Secondly, the City believes that rate adjustments should be made only in light of the costs associated with providing the service. Automatic rate increases do not encourage DEO to decrease costs. Moreover, they do not provide a mechanism whereby DEO would present its costs in a public setting prior to any rate increases, which would allow decreased costs to factor into the rate equation. If DEO's costs decrease, consumption decreases, but the rate automatically increases, then DEO realizes even more profit on the backs of its customers. This is an unacceptable result.

Thank you again for your consideration of these policy issues. Your decision will directly affect the lives of tens of thousands of people, many of whom live in the Greater Cleveland area.

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		•	

Name: Liz Hernandez

Position: Property Services Director, Cleveland Housing Network

Address: 2999 Payne Ave

Cleveland, Ohio 44114

Date: August 4, 2008

Dominion East Ohio has funded a weatherization program "Housewarming" since 1987.

For the past 20 years, Cleveland Housing Network has been the administrator of the program, working with a wide network of community development corporations to effectively deliver the services throughout the Dominion territory. Dominion to continually fine-tune and improve the services and hopes to continue its long and productive partnership. It is an example of a partnership which cooks

The Housewarming program has had consistent funding of 3.5 million over the past 5 years. The program reaches approximately 1500 customers on an annual basis providing insulation, furnace repair or replacement, carbon monoxide detectors and air leakage work in order to decrease the consumption of the qualifying low income client.

Over the years, under CHN's direction and with the guidance and cooperation from Dominion, the Housewarming program has developed its model to become more comprehensive, moving towards technical standards that the state Home Weatherization Assistance Program have developed and standardized and that are widely regarded as state of the art in the energy conservation world.

CHN has encouraged collaboration with other utility programs, such as the First Energy Program, the Cleveland Public power program, and the City of Cleveland water program te maximize as well as the Home Weatherization Assistance Program to maximize the energy savings and more cost effectively deliver all. Leveraged funds over the past 20 years could amount to \$20 million dollars or more, and represent a delivery system that is efficient and effective, impacting gas, electric and water consumption

If HN is committed to continuing to work with the State of Ohio's energy office and other utility efforts to maximize the energy savings for the low income customers who continue to truggle to keep up with their heating and household bills.

In addition to the direct benefit to the customer in energy terms, Housewarming also impacts the safety of their household, as Housewarming provides funding for carbon monoxide detectors, the replacement of faulty and dangerous furnaces, as well as correction of chimney problems which if not corrected could be fatal to the resident. Housewarming inspectors have encountered many of these situations over the years and the program has saved lives.

The environmental benefit is not quantified in my testimony, however the reduction in emissions is a non-energy benefit to all customers and to the world,. Avoided bad debt for the company is another benefit, as studies have shown the reduction of participants arrearage as a directly resulting from receiving weatherization services. A reduction in arrearage benefits all rate payers, as well as the company.

As I previously mentioned, funding has been fairly consistent and has given the network of Housewarming providers a means to service those in need. The program is designed to service households falling under 150% of federal income poverty guidelines. For a family of four, the guideline is \$31,000 per year. For a household of 1 the guideline is \$15,600 per year. We have all noticed the state of the economy in Ohio and throughout the country. Social service agencies can tell you that the need is growing. Statistics show us that the number of families that fall in the 150% guidelines is growing. Many are closed And then there are the families that fall outside these guidelines who are barely making it and cannot qualify for energy assistance towards their hill or a conservation program.

And then there are the families that ran ourside the state of the families that ran ourside the state including program, is currently stretched beyond its funding limits. The territory has greatly expanded, yet the funding has not.

Presently the funding covers areas such as Canton, Barberton, Akron, Youngstown, Ashtabula, Painesville, the City Of Cleveland, inner ring suburbs, and territory throughout the state including down to Marietta. There are many other communities not mentioned as it would take too long to even list. The point is that these areas are hurting economically and the funding level needs to be dramatically increased to come close to serving the customers who need these services.

Our experience is that low income customers want to conserve. Many live in homes that are older and leakier than other customers. It takes careful assessments and adequate funding to cost effectively impact the energy consumption and the gas bill.

The funding level needs to come closer to \$10 million per year in order to adequately fund the current need and foreseeable need to reach the customers needing the services.

Cleveland Housing Network is looking towards the future of Housewarming which would include:

- Full adoption of the technical standards developed by the Ohio Energy Office
- Certification of all contractors and inspectors which may require additional coursework in house diagnostics, furnace inspection, and ongoing energy related cousework, which CHN is committed to. The discussion with the Ohio Weatherization Training center has already begun in order to reach our technical goals for the program.
- Increased level of funding, expanding the reach of the program to a higher number of customers, and to fund the measures needed in each home.
- A demand side management component to offer similar services to all classes of residential customers, not strictly low income. This program design could feature very low interest loans, or rebates to customers to help offset the cost of an energy

audit or energy efficiency upgrades. There are some designs for demand side management programs that could be easily implemented as all consumers face the struggles of a higher gas bill and the higher costs of living in general.

CHN also administers a fuel fund for bill payment assistance, funded with Dominion dollars, which will expire this year. It provides approximately \$137,00, with only a 10% administrative fee. CHN works with clients and other emergency funding sources to stretch these dollars in order to maximize the number of clients it can benefit. It is for some the only way they can keep their utilities on. It is a last resort emergency fund. Since CHN also is involved in the administration of emergency HEAP dollars, the staff is able to most effectively work out these payment plans with the utility companies and the client. It is our recommendation that the fuel fund be consolidated and thus more cost effectively coordinated to complement the emergency HEAP network. It is unfair to families in crisis to have to chase down the emergency dollars that are available by going around to other agencies who are involved with Dominion fuel fund dollars, such as energy share.

In closing, I ask the commission look at the enormous multiple benefits of the Housewarming program and support its expansion, as well as funding for demand side management programs which can assist the struggling customers who outside the income limits of the Housewarming program.

> + LASTZY to drive home the points regarding the chent needs
> I offer the following
> excerpt from letters received
> by CHO.

Cleveland Housing Network, Inc. 2999 Payne Avenue #306 Cleveland, Ohio 44114

To whom it may concern at:
Ohio Department of Development
Cleveland Housing Network, Inc.
The Housewarming Program
Tim Davis



We wanted to write a letter of sincere gratitude. This program has made it possible for our household to stay warm and not pay an extraordinary amount in energy bills. We have already seen a huge drop in the amount of energy consumption for last and this month, and we are sure it will continue through the entire winter season!

We want to take a little time to thank Tim Davis for his efforts in completing this job. He has done fantastic work through it all. He continued to stay on-top of any issue that came up and saw it through until the end. He was very friendly and considerate even though there were times he had the right not to be. Thank you very much Tim Davis for your much appreciated efforts!

The Wisecup's:

TO WHOM IT MAY LONGERN:

I AM WRITING TO EXPRESS MY DEEP APPRECIATION FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE IN HAVING MY HOUSE WEATHERIZED.

I AM VERY GRATEFUL TO YOU FOR PROVIDING
THE FUNDS FOR A NEW FURNACE AS WELL AS
COMPLETE INSULATION. I PROMISE TO THINK
OF YOU EACH TIME I RECEIVE A GASBILL!
I RLSO WANT TO THANK YOU FOR HELPING ME
OBTAIN AN ELECTRICAL UPGRADE. THIS IS AN
OLD HOUSE AND I WAS ALWAYS CONCERNED
ABOUT THE WIRING. NOW, I FEEL MUCH MORE
SAFE.

THANK YOU, AGAIN FOR YOUR HELP. GOD BLESS YOU FOR ALL THE ASSISTANCE YOU PROVIDE FOR OTHERS, AS WELL. The Public Utilities Commission of Ohio has assigned for public hearing at this time and place Case Nos. 07-829-GA-AIR, 07-830-GA-ALT, 07-831-GA-AAM, 08-169-GA-ALT, and 06-1453-GA-UNC, which are captioned, In the Matter of the Application of The East Ohio Gas Company d/b/a Dominion East Ohio for Authority to Increase Rates for its Gas Distribution Service and other Related Matters.

I was present at the local public hearing held in <u>Cevelanel</u>, Ohio, on 2008, at 12;36 am pm I am opposed to the proposal for the reasons expressed by those who have already testified.

Name (Please print)	Address
Pat Sharkey	3406 W 148 Cleve OH 44/11
11m Semanar	18903 NOTTINGham 44110
CONNIE DOWS- NIELSON	-
WILLIAM A. WEBER	2464 WARRENSUICE UNIVERTS 44118
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I was present at the local public hearing held in ________, Ohio, on _______, 2008, at _______, am/pm. I am opposed to the proposal for the reasons expressed by those who have already testified.

Name (Please print)	Address
Glenn Waskowski	Great Plaintield Cleveland Onio
Schryler M. Cook	Cleveland Onio 801 E 232nd St. Fuelid Off 44123-2811
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CLEVELAND DOMINION EAST OHIO GAS 07-829-6A-AIR

ANYONE WANTING TO TESTIFY IN THE ABOVE CASE, PLEASE $\mbox{\bf PRINT}$ YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS BELOW:

NAME	ADDRESS AND ZIP CODE
11 BILL MOUNTCASTLE	43CO W. 1947H
	CLEVELAND, OHIO 44135
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	VIIV
6 Julianna Karoli	
7. Tustin Reiter	1701 E. 12th St.
8. / Dara Me Kreeve	Cleveland, UH 44114 or POB14604 Cleveland 44114
9. Marie Rehma	2 412/ Hinsdale Ad.
South En	elex on 44/21
10. Tim A.F. Mandelsolu	2030 EUXIDADENNE \$100 Cleveland, Sur 44115
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DOMINION EAST OHID GAS 07-829-GA-AIR

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