

BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF OHIO

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In the Matter of the :
Application of Ohio :
American Water Company to :
Increase its Rates in its : Case No. 07-1112-WS-AIR
Entire Service Area for :
Water Service and Sewer :
Service. :

- - -

PROCEEDINGS

before Ms. Cheryl Roberto, Commissioner, and Mr. Dick
Bulgrin, Hearing Examiner, at Faith Covenant Church,
3607 Dempsey Road, Westerville, Ohio, called at 6:00
p.m. on Wednesday, August 20, 2008.

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PUBLIC STATEMENTS - WESTERVILLE, OHIO

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9 On behalf of the Residential Ratepayers
10 of Ohio American Water Company.

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1	INDEX	3
2	- - -	
3	WITNESSES:	PAGE
4	Paul Hanly	13
5	Patricia Eldridge	22
6	Sheldon Schoen	22
7	Joy Neff	25
8	Alex Cofield	28
9	Valerie Kohsman	35
10	Richard Bernstein	37
11	Charles Drumm	40
12	Ruth Hutchinson	44
13	Sue Hale	45
14	Richard Hamilton	47
15	David Allers	52
16	Barb Place	54
17	Michelle Baum	56
18	Richard Westfall	60
19	Sharon Westfall	63

20	Dan Loy	66
21	Nick Lugin	73
22	Dennis Fletcher	75
23	Tiana Edwards	79
24	Brian Butterfield	81

	4	
1 WITNESSES:		PAGE
2 Robin Thomas	84	
3 James Welch	87	
4 Don Hight	93	
5 Kim Saunders	95	
6 Kallie Wile	97	
7 Leah Beaumont	98	
8 Greg Gossman	103	
9 Phillip Bouton	108	
10 Ralph Murphy	113	
11 Bill Riggs	119	
12 Linda Goldstein	122	
13 Thomas Tefft	127, 151	
14 Lynn George	137	
15 Kathleen Durkin	141	
16 Joseph Kakabar	147	
17 Ron Bricker	152	
18 Pamela Clegg	163	
19 Carolyn Cordray	167	

20 Tiffany Hollatz 174

21 Pamela Sperling 176

22 - - -

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1 Wednesday Evening Session,

2 August 20, 2008.

3 - - -

4 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Thank you, Mr. Welch.

5 Good evening. The Public Utilities Commission of

6 Ohio has assigned for public hearing at this time and

7 place case number 07-1112-WS-AIR being in the matter

8 of the application --

9 FROM THE FLOOR: Can't hear very well in

10 the back.

11 EXAMINER BULGRIN: This is the fourth

12 hearing in case number 07-1112-WS-AIR being the

13 Application of Ohio American Water Company to

14 Increase its Rates for Water and Sewer Services

15 Provided for its Entire Service Area.

16 My name is Dick Bulgrin, I'm an

17 attorney-examiner assigned by the Commission to

18 conduct this hearing, and seated with me tonight is

19 Commissioner Cheryl Roberto. I'm going to ask her to

20 say a few words to you in a moment, but first I'd
21 like to note that the PUCO has personnel from our
22 Service Monitoring and Enforcement Department and
23 from our Public Affairs Office in the back at the
24 tables and if you wish to sign up to testify tonight,

6

1 please make sure to stop by that table and sign up if
2 you haven't already done so.

3 Let me turn this over to Ms. Roberto for
4 a moment.

5 COMMISSIONER ROBERTO: Good evening. As
6 Dick said, my name's Cheryl Roberto, and I just
7 wanted a chance to say hello and thank you for coming
8 here this evening and taking your time out to share
9 your information.

10 I'd like to provide a little context for
11 you for where we are in this process. When a company
12 makes application for a rate increase, they turn in
13 reams and reams of information and our experts that
14 are on the PUCO staff start digging through it,
15 analyzing it, asking questions, all kinds of
16 testimony is filed and questions are raised and
17 hearings are held.

18 But what we're doing this morning is --
19 this afternoon, excuse me, is a special hearing

20 reserved for us to take testimony from consumers so
21 that we have the opportunity to hear directly from
22 consumers about what your thoughts are about the rate
23 increase, what your experience is with this company,
24 anything that you think the Commission should hear

1 before a decision is made.

2 And I want to be clear about where we are
3 in the process. I am one of five commissioners, and
4 when we get the case, it's still quite a ways down
5 the road. What we will do is we will review the
6 reports of the expert staff, we will review the
7 intervenors' testimony, and all the hearing records.

8 I took a quick look at the file today and
9 right now we have over 200 documents filed in it;
10 many of them are letters from some of you. So this
11 evening is an opportunity for us to hear directly
12 from you.

13 In doing that we'll ask you to come up
14 and speak into the microphone. You'll be asked to be
15 sworn in so that it will be testimony, but it's very
16 informal even though it feels like it might be -- it
17 will not be intimidating. I promise that all we want
18 to do is hear from you. If I have a question, I may
19 ask you, but I think that in all likelihood we just

20 want to sit and listen and hear what your experience

21 has been.

22 I don't think there was anything else I

23 needed to do. Just as an explanation for where Dick

24 is in this process, and he can explain as well, is

8

1 after all this work is done by staff and by the
2 parties, Dick is the hearing examiner who hears all
3 this information and assembles it and provides a
4 report and recommendation to the Commission.

5 So what we end up doing is getting a
6 report from him and then we can go back in and read
7 firsthand all the testimony, all the transcripts, all
8 the letters that you filed, and I promise you that we
9 do do that.

10 So with that I would encourage you that
11 if you haven't signed up to speak already, please do.
12 You can always waive when your time comes and say
13 "Somebody else said what I wanted to," but please
14 don't hesitate. We will sit here for as long as it
15 takes because we really do want to hear from you.

16 I'll turn it over to Dick.

17 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Thanks, Cheryl.

18 In addition to the PUCO staff there's
19 also representatives of the Ohio American Water

20 Company and the Ohio Consumers' Counsel who has
21 intervened in this case and will represent all the
22 residential utility customers affected by the
23 proposed rate increase.

24 Other intervenors in this case are the

1 city of Marion and Dragood Management, and if I can
2 take appearances for the record.

3 MS. BLOOMFIELD: Sure. Your Honors, on
4 behalf of the Ohio American Water Company, Sally W.
5 Bloomfield and Thomas J. O'Brien from the law firm
6 Bricker & Eckler in Columbus, Ohio.

7 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Thank you.

8 I don't believe there are any other -- is
9 there any other counsel here who might -- I'm sorry,
10 Ms. Hotz.

11 MS. HOTZ: My name is Ann Hotz, and I
12 work for Janine Migden-Ostrander, she is the Ohio
13 Consumers' Counsel, and we represent residential
14 customers of Ohio American Water Company in front of
15 the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio.

16 We filed about 40 objections to the Staff
17 Report that was mentioned by the commissioner before
18 and we are actively involved in this and we are eager
19 to hear what you have to say. Thank you.

20 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Thank you.

21 Ohio American Water filed an application

22 with the PUCO to increase its rates for water and

23 wastewater service on November 13th, 2007. As part

24 of the rate case proceeding the staff of the PUCO

10

1 inspected portions of the company's plant and
2 equipment, interviewed company personnel and
3 government officials, reviewed company records, and
4 performed analysis of data including financial
5 information collected from the company.

6 Staff then prepared and filed a report on
7 May 28th, 2008. The Staff Report summarizes the
8 staff's findings regarding the company's financial
9 situation and service performance and sets forth the
10 staff's recommendations in this case.

11 You should have received an information
12 sheet when you arrived tonight from the back, if you
13 didn't pick one up, I think there's more back there,
14 but that fact sheet provides an overview of the
15 recommendations of the Staff Report as well as an
16 overview of the procedures in this case.

17 This is the last of the four local public
18 hearings scheduled in this case. The evidentiary
19 hearing is scheduled to resume on next Tuesday,

20 August 26th, at 10 a.m. at the Commission offices,
21 180 East Broad Street in Columbus in hearing room
22 11-G.

23 If we don't get through everybody tonight
24 or if you can't wait and you want to come in and

11

1 testify then, or you know somebody that does, you can
2 come in and testify next Tuesday at 10 o'clock, but
3 you've got to come downtown to do that.

4 The purpose of the hearing tonight is to
5 allow the public, you, to testify and to actually
6 enter your comments in the record in this case. As I
7 said before, if you want to testify, please sign in
8 in the back, and I will call you up one at a time in
9 order of who signed up.

10 Before you begin your statement I'll ask
11 your name and address, please spell your last name
12 for the court reporter, and your testimony will
13 become part of the official record of this case. And
14 as Cheryl said, it does get reviewed by the
15 commissioners before they make a final decision.

16 Before presenting sworn testimony you'll
17 be required to take an oath saying that what you're
18 about to say in this is true, and the attorneys for
19 the company or the OCC can ask you questions if they

20 choose to do so.

21 Tonight's hearing is being transcribed by

22 a court reporter so please speak clearly so that the

23 reporter can accurately reflect your comments on the

24 record. And if you have a prepared statement, it

12

1 would be helpful if you could provide the reporter
2 with a copy of that.

3 We appreciate your participation in
4 tonight's hearing and we want everyone who wishes to
5 make a statement to be able to do so, so if you
6 choose to testify, please be considerate of others
7 waiting to give their testimony and keep your
8 statements to a reasonable period.

9 Okay.

10 COMMISSIONER ROBERTO: Just one other
11 option. If you find it uncomfortable to come to the
12 front of the room and say anything, you are more than
13 welcome to write a letter and send it in and that
14 will be added to the docket as well and that would be
15 read just as your testimony here is, and some of the
16 folks in the back of the room can tell you how to get
17 your letters in if you choose to do that instead.

18 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Okay. Pamela Clegg.

19 FROM THE FLOOR: She said she wants to

20 pass over her for now.

21 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Okay. Paul Hanly.

22 (Witness sworn.)

23 - - -

24

13

1 PAUL HANLY

2 presented himself as a public witness, and being

3 first duly sworn, testified as follows:

4 DIRECT TESTIMONY

5 MR. HANLY: Paul Hanly, H-a-n-l-y, 6474

6 Purplefinch Court, Sunbury Woods, Blendon Township.

7 Seems like I've lived in Sunbury Woods

8 for 28 years now. Some of you folks may know me; I

9 know a couple of folks on this side do. Seems like

10 every couple years we go through the same thing with

11 what used to be Ohio Utilities, what's now American

12 Water or something like that.

13 I can recall about 20 years ago when they

14 kind of roped us into the reverse osmosis thing, the

15 forefighting battles we had, and we lost, and it

16 seems like every time we go through this we kind of

17 take it on the chin just a little bit more. But

18 that's in the news and everybody knows that.

19 Now, I can't speak for the folks in Huber

20 Ridge, but in Sunbury Woods we have no choice in the
21 matter. It's in our deed that we have to buy water
22 from what used to be Ohio Utilities. When Bill Davis
23 built Sunbury Woods, he used to own Ohio Utilities
24 and he made sure that, you know, we bought from him.

14

1 Unfortunately, over the course of time
2 too there's been all kinds of chatter through all the
3 public hearings we've had over the years about,
4 "Well, why don't we get water from Westerville? Why
5 don't we get water from Columbus?" Well, we can't.

6 Like I said, I can't speak for Huber
7 Ridge or Glengary, but I can say in Sunbury Woods
8 they're private lines. We tried this a bunch of
9 years ago. We tried to form our own water district a
10 bunch of years ago, it was going to cost a million
11 and a half to buy the water lines that were in the
12 ground then, then we had to buy the deeds back from
13 everybody that owned a house in Sunbury Woods and
14 sell it back to them again just to get the deed
15 changed so we could have our own water district.

16 Needless to say that went down the
17 crappers. Speaking of crappers, 26 percent increase
18 in water, 36 percent increase in the sewage; speaking
19 of crappers.

20 Now, I don't know about -- I've been, you
21 know, out here quite a while and I don't think
22 there's any more residential construction going to
23 take place in Blendon Township, at least Sunbury
24 Woods, Huber or Glengary, I don't think there's any

15

1 more businesses going to go in, so it seems to me
2 that the base they have right now is the base they're
3 going to have out of our neck of the woods, but yet
4 they're still trying to jack it up and jack it up and
5 jack it up.

6 Now, every story you'll -- you'll hear
7 people coming up here, just like we have in other
8 hearings, talk about the different quality of water
9 you have no matter where you live within Blendon
10 Township. In Sunbury Woods there's been all kind of
11 war stories even with the reverse osmosis, even with
12 everything they've tried to do to improve our quality
13 of water.

14 You'll hear all kinds of stories. Every
15 street is different. Some people have sludge in
16 their water yet. Some people have crap in there,
17 sand, and all kinds of sediment. Where I live I
18 haven't had any problems. I may be one of the lucky
19 ones, but I'm not the end of the trunk line.

20 And you'll probably hear testimony
21 tonight from other folks saying, you know, that the
22 quality of water really stinks. I took out my water
23 softener because they told me I had to. They said
24 with the water softener and reverse osmosis it was

16

1 going to be more harm than help to me. So I took my

2 water softener out.

3 Now, a lot of folks decided not to and I

4 can't, you know, can't testify to what their quality

5 of water is, but just the point of the fact is that

6 it just keeps going up and up and up and up.

7 I went to my boss last week when I was

8 reading over these numbers to prepare for tonight and

9 I said to my boss, I said, "Jerry," I said, "I've

10 been here for quite a few years." I said, "I think

11 it's about time for a pay raise." And he said, "What

12 are you thinking about, Paul?" I said, "Eh,

13 36 percent."

14 (Laughter.)

15 MR. HANLY: That's exactly what he did.

16 He said, "Paul, how long you been here?" I said,

17 "About five years." He said, "Wait till you're 28

18 years, maybe we'll think about it then."

19 Then again, you know, the deed

20 restriction thing, the water lines have been in the
21 ground, the water sewage lines have been in the
22 ground for 35 years at least in Sunbury Woods, and
23 over here in Huber Ridge and Glengary it's probably
24 about the same.

17

1 You know, we're sister communities, we're
2 brother communities, however you want to look at it,
3 and years and years ago Sunbury Woods led this
4 charge, it's nice to see that Huber Ridge is leading
5 the charge, but it's nice to see at least everybody
6 from all communitiesing, and I even heard some folks
7 from Blacklick are here tonight.

8 Everybody's involved in this because
9 everybody's affected by it, and if PUCO is supposed
10 to be representing us, now, I've got no problem with
11 somebody making a buck, I've got -- they're a
12 for-profit company, they're incorporated, they're
13 entitled to make a dollar, but not these many
14 dollars.

15 If I may, I'd just like to share some
16 numbers with you, I'll be real brief, and Bill and
17 Jerry can testify to the fact I'm real brief every
18 once in a while.

19 A return on investment, I mean, we all

20 look for return on investment, and especially those
21 of us who are on fixed incomes, who are retired, our
22 veteran citizens and things like that, we look for a
23 return on our investment.

24 Okay. Last January -- now, I'm going to

18

1 preface this with one thing. \$13 of my water bill
2 goes for sewage and water line protection. They know
3 my water lines are going to break because they've
4 been in the ground for 30-some years so they said,
5 "Well, Paul, here's what we're going to do. We're
6 going to sell you some insurance to help you just in
7 case, you know, our water lines crack in the ground
8 and we'll help you, you know, sell you some
9 insurance." It's that calculated risk thing. But I
10 want to preface this by saying my water bill, \$13 a
11 month for this insurance company.

12 Now -- the numbers include the \$13 --
13 last January my water bill was \$85. My electric bill
14 was \$161; in January.

15 In February my water bill was \$75. My
16 electric bill was \$145.

17 March, my water bill was 54. My electric
18 was 82.

19 April, May, and June they decided not to

20 read it, it was \$79 for water each month. My

21 electric bill was 59, 69, and 80 respectively.

22 Now, "Where are you going with all these

23 numbers, Paul?" Well, I can't use a whole lot of

24 water, but I use a whole lot of electricity, and it

19

1 seems to me that we're getting a better return on our
2 dollar, I am anyway, I have an all-electric house,
3 I've got the air conditioning and, you know, the
4 washer and dryers, the freezers and refrigerators and
5 all this stuff, and they run all the time. I can't
6 run water all the time.

7 It says, you know, in the numbers that
8 they give us their increase is based on 600 cubic
9 feet of water. Well, I didn't know what 600 cubic
10 feet of water was until I started looking at my bill.
11 I met the minimum. I'm at 600 cubic feet right now.
12 And I know the last --

13 A couple weeks ago there was a block
14 party at my place and there were folks on the next
15 street over and we started chatting about all this
16 stuff, and they had a bunch of little people running
17 around, and they asked me what my water bill was. I
18 said "\$79, something like that," it was just me and
19 my wife. They have a whole bunch of little ones.

20 Theirs is double what mine is.

21 Now, this really helps the value of

22 property in Sunbury Woods and Huber Ridge when folks

23 come in and find out that their water's going to be

24 more than electricity.

1 I think that there has to be some sort of
2 an equalization, a stabilizing of exactly what these
3 folks are allowed to make. The electric company can
4 do whatever they want to do, but they also have
5 ceilings that says how far they can go. It appears
6 that these folks at American Water or whatever
7 they're called now, they change names like we change
8 socks, but whatever, they can -- they can just
9 arbitrarily come in and jack it around.

10 Last time they got 17 percent. This time
11 they want a gazillion percent. I don't know how many
12 zeros is in a gazillion, but it's more than I'm
13 willing to pay.

14 I'm hoping that with our testimony here
15 and with all the testimonies, and I've been to all
16 the ones we had over at the Blendon Center, I'm
17 hoping that PUCO listens to us and not only to us,
18 but the folks in Blacklick, the folks in Marion, the
19 folks up north, they listen to everybody and finally

20 realize that enough is enough.

21 My boss said, when I asked him for the
22 38 percent, he said "Right, uh-huh." I think that
23 it's about time that these folks understand that
24 enough is enough. Thank you.

1 (Applause.)

2 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Patricia Eldridge.

3 (Witness sworn.)

4 EXAMINER BULGRIN: State your name and
5 address, please.

6 - - -

7 PATRICIA ELDRIDGE

8 presented herself as a public witness, and being
9 first duly sworn, testified as follows:

10 DIRECT TESTIMONY

11 MS. ELDRIDGE: Patricia Eldridge,
12 E-l-d-r-i-d-g-e. We live in Madison Township and I'm
13 here to tell you the water is just nasty, I don't
14 care what they say.

15 FROM THE FLOOR: Can't hear you.

16 MS. ELDRIDGE: The water is just nasty, I
17 don't care what they've done to it. And they will
18 tell you that they've done this and they've done
19 that, and it just goes up and up and up, and it's

20 only two of us and it's still \$70.

21 And they say, "Well, we've done this and

22 we've done that." Well, you obviously didn't do it

23 at our house because it's still nasty. You can't

24 make coffee. You can't make tea. You can't leave

22

1 water in the commode when you go off on vacation
2 because when you come back, there's going to be a
3 black ring around it, and I'm telling you it's going
4 to be there because we just got back. We were gone
5 two weeks in July, water bill's still \$70. Nobody
6 was there to use it.

7 You know, I'm like him, I think it's
8 plenty high enough. Thank you.

9 (Applause.)

10 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Thank you.

11 Sheldon, is it Schoen?

12 - - -

13 SHELDON SCHOEN

14 presented himself as a public witness, and being
15 first duly sworn, testified as follows:

16 DIRECT TESTIMONY

17 MR. SCHOEN: I have a hearing problem so
18 I hope that you can hear me, not that what I'm going
19 to say is so profound, but I'd like you to hear it

20 anyway. This other gentleman went into a lot of
21 things, and I'm going to try to be brief but I'm not
22 very good at that.

23 I've lived here since 1971 and, over
24 around the corner on Balboa Court, and we've been

1 through a lot of water companies. It started out, my
2 wife reminded me, that Huber Homes were the original
3 people who had the water company, then they sold it
4 to Citizens Utility, then Ohio Utility, and now Ohio
5 American. So it must either be a good business or a
6 lousy business. I would say it's a good business.

7 We're now owned by a company in Germany
8 who put nothing back into the community, all they did
9 was take. I have nothing against Germans. I've
10 been married to one for 44 years. She's a very nice
11 lady.

12 But there are just two people anymore,
13 and we used to be five; our kids are gone a long time
14 ago. And the bills just keep going up and up and up
15 and up. We take an occasional shower so that we
16 don't offend, and we run the dishwasher a couple
17 times a week, and the last bill was \$90.

18 And they have a new thing now where they
19 sell you additional things to cover you in case

20 something goes wrong. I used to think that the water
21 companies were responsible for something, but
22 obviously they're not. So I'm afraid if I don't have
23 coverage, if something's going to go wrong, it's
24 going to be my fault. So we spend an extra \$25 a

1 month between reverse osmosis and all these
2 additional charges.

3 So to sum it up, really we've been
4 fighting the water company for 35 years and they just
5 keep coming to the trough. They want more and more
6 and more. When William Spratley was the consumers'
7 counsel, we got a pretty good break for a while, but
8 now we're getting hammered again.

9 And I just think the timing is terrible
10 with the economy as bad as it is. People paying a
11 lot for gas for their cars, worried about their jobs,
12 I just think the last thing this company needs from
13 us is an increase, so I would like to ask the PUCO to
14 one time say no. No. No. No. That's all.

15 (Applause.)

16 COMMISSIONER ROBERTO: Thank you.

17 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Thank you.

18 Richard Martin.

19 MR. MARTIN: I'm going to waive at this

20 time. Thank you very much.

21 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Thank you.

22 Joy Neff.

23 - - -

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1 JOY NEFF

2 presented herself as a public witness, and being
3 first duly sworn, testified as follows:

4 DIRECT TESTIMONY

5 MS. NEFF: My name is Joy, J-o-y, and it
6 is J-o-y-a, Neff, N-e-f-f. I live at 3615 Stockholm,
7 that's in Huber Ridge.

8 I thought surely after the first
9 gentleman spoke, I thought please, Lord, don't let me
10 have to follow him. Well, this is just as bad. And
11 that one guy that waived, I'm going to get you.

12 I really have not much more to say. I
13 think that the issues have been raised, but I guess
14 what I did want to add was I don't do much running
15 around in the community and getting acquainted with
16 the neighbors, but I did do that as I went around to
17 get signed petitions, and I was appalled at the
18 number of people who when I said, "Have you signed a
19 petition opposing the water increase?" they almost

20 grabbed the clipboard out of my hand. It's really

21 true.

22 Some people, even as people were leaving

23 their driveway to go someplace while they were

24 signing the petition, they'd say, "Wait a minute.

26

1 Wait a minute. Come and sign this lady's petition."

2 Everyone is extremely upset. Now, the

3 rest of what I would have to say has to do with

4 hearsay because, no, I happen -- I've lived here for

5 40 years and, by gosh I got the rest of you beat, and

6 we don't have a problem with the water quality, at

7 least not a whole lot. There is just two of us

8 anymore and, no, we live on what they call the Hill,

9 I didn't know there was a hill in Huber, but I guess

10 there is. And so we don't have a whole lot of

11 problem with the water quality.

12 But we have the same suffering that you

13 have with the cost of the water. We, for just the

14 two of us, pay \$90. We often go away for a month;

15 doesn't make any difference, our water bill's the

16 same amount. I wonder if they really read it.

17 Sometime I'm going to figure out how to read that

18 thing.

19 But the people that did sign the petition

20 had horror stories and some of them have not been
21 addressed tonight and I would like to do that, and it
22 has to do with shutoff. There are folks, and there
23 were at least three or four people that I spoke to
24 that said that their water had been shut off within

1 three days of not having paid their bill.

2 One gentleman told me that he does not
3 have a landline at home, he has a cell phone, so he
4 gives the cell phone number out to whomever. And the
5 water company of course has his cell phone.

6 So he was past due, two days, in paying
7 his bill, and the water company called him, cell
8 phone, he was on his way home, they said, "We're
9 going to shut your water off." He said, "Oh, no.
10 No, don't do that. I'll be home in a half hour."
11 And they said, "Sorry, we're going to shut your water
12 off."

13 He did come home. The man was there; he
14 was shutting off his water. And he said, "Wait a
15 minute. I'll go inside and get the checkbook and pay
16 the bill." He said, "Oh, no." He said, "I've been
17 ordered to shut off your water." Now that's
18 absolutely ridiculous. And I just have to say the
19 same thing, enough's enough.

20 (Applause.)

21 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Thank you.

22 Alex Cofield.

23 - - -

24

28

1 ALEX COFIELD

2 presented herself as a public witness, and being
3 first duly sworn, testified as follows:

4 DIRECT TESTIMONY

5 MS. COFIELD: Good evening. My name is
6 Alex Cofield, C-o-f-i-e-l-d, and I live at 3515
7 Makassar Drive.

8 I am here this evening to express my
9 opposition to the proposed amount of increase in the
10 cost of water and wastewater service requested by
11 Ohio American Water and recommended by the PUCO
12 staff.

13 An increase of over 30 percent for water
14 service and over 36 percent for wastewater service is
15 too much. I understand that costs have increased in
16 the past year, there's fuel costs, there's health
17 care costs, et cetera. Because of these increases I
18 would accept an increase of anywhere between 5 and
19 8 percent.

20 Dual increases of over 30 percent each or
21 a combined increase of over 60 percent is just too
22 much. I believe that the driver behind this
23 outrageous increase is the fact that we, the
24 residents of Huber Ridge, spoke up last year. We

1 banned together and demanded yet once again that Ohio
2 American Water provide water that is clear and
3 without particulates in the water.

4 Yes, because of our great efforts last
5 year we are being penalized this year because they
6 can recoup costs for their expenses of the previous
7 year the following year.

8 The amount of increase requested and
9 PUCO's staff's agreement with that increase is
10 testimony to the fact that Ohio American Water has
11 not maintained their equipment well enough over the
12 years to prevent brown water and particulate in the
13 water.

14 From what I understand, these issues are
15 not new and did not develop overnight. They are
16 long-standing issues that Ohio American Water knew
17 about when they bought the previous company. If they
18 did not know about the issues, then shame on them for
19 not doing their homework.

20 Because of their decision not to address
21 the equipment issues, they should be the ones
22 accountable for the cost of addressing the issues
23 today. Residents have brought these issues to their
24 attention numerous times, but Ohio American Water did

30

1 nothing until last year when PUCO made them do so.

2 Let's look at the impact of having Ohio

3 American Water provide water and sewer services in

4 the area of Huber Ridge. Impact number one: This is

5 the highest water rate in the area. The 3 CCFs of

6 water in which my household uses, our monthly bill is

7 \$41 a month. If I lived in Westerville, that same

8 amount of water and sewage would cost me \$26.88;

9 that's 45 percent less. And Westerville does not

10 charge a monthly service charge. If I lived in

11 Columbus, my monthly bill would be \$29 a month;

12 that's 30 percent less.

13 Westerville and Columbus, being

14 municipalities, they are basically nonprofit

15 organizations. So what this tells me is that Ohio

16 American Water is making either a 30 percent or

17 45 percent profit on us. With the pending requested

18 rate increase the 3 CCFs of water would cost me over

19 \$50 a month and that is nearly double what they pay

20 right now in Westerville.

21 Impact number two: People have moved out

22 of our neighborhood solely because of the cost of

23 water, and not only does that have an impact on the

24 housing stock, but it has impact on the human

1 relationships in our neighborhood because your
2 neighbors leave because they can't pay for water.

3 Once, a rate increase is approved, it is
4 approved forever. The cost will never decrease. If
5 we should be saddled with this cost to cover the
6 expenses of last year, the significant maintenance
7 upgrades for the duration -- hang on.

8 Once a rate increase is approved, it is
9 approved forever. The cost will not decrease. We
10 should not be saddled with the costs to cover a
11 one-time significant maintenance upgrade for the
12 duration of Ohio American Water's ownership of the
13 plant, and likely the next owner.

14 If we are required to pay for the total
15 cost of last year's upgrade, then it should be for a
16 reasonable amount of time, say one year. It is not
17 fair to compound future rate increases on a spike in
18 rate increase because of a lack of upkeep on the part
19 of the owner.

20 If you think about it, similar to
21 compound interest on a savings account, if your
22 interest goes up one year, you have more money that
23 next year, and then you add more interest on that;
24 it's compounded.

1 With a significant increase, if the
2 increase was approved at the current rate, even a
3 5 percent increase next year or the year after will
4 still be significant because we will still be paying
5 on the significant increase which we have right now.

6 I also wanted to talk about something
7 else too. There's a charge on the water bill which I
8 do not understand, it's the service charge. Until
9 the rate increase last year it was split into two
10 charges, one for water and one for wastewater
11 service, now it is combined into one charge and it is
12 nearly \$10 a month. What does this cover? Isn't the
13 cost of employees and the equipment covered in the
14 rate increases? Neither Westerville nor Columbus
15 charge a service charge.

16 If it is for meter reading, which we've
17 already heard ought to be a joke, how are they
18 measuring sewage without a deduct meter?

19 Aside from the rate increase in service

20 charge issues I would like to remind PUCO of an
21 additional issue I have with Ohio American Water and
22 ask to have this addressed in the final decision,
23 namely the service hours at the water plant in Huber
24 Ridge.

1 Last year I received a bill without any
2 water or sewer charge included. It did include the
3 service charge, though. I know water was used during
4 that period so I called Ohio American Water to ask to
5 have my meter looked at.

6 I made an appointment through Ohio
7 American Water Customer Service for a technician to
8 come by the house between the hours of 4:30 and 6:30
9 that next day. I was home at 4:30, and I waited. No
10 one showed up.

11 I Called Customer service and was told by
12 a different representative that the service hours at
13 this location is 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. I believe that
14 most people in Huber Ridge work between the hours of
15 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. and would have to take time off to
16 attend to a piece of equipment owned by Ohio American
17 Water that is not working.

18 If we are to have increased rates every
19 year, I want an increase in service hours. I suggest

20 the following: One night or two nights a week that
21 there would be extended service hours until 6 p.m.
22 I'm not asking 8, I'm not asking 9, I just want to
23 have somebody available in the evening hour so that
24 those of us who work during the day have a small

34

1 window of time that we can be there and we don't have
2 to take time off of our jobs to deal with that
3 equipment.

4 And/or have a few hours on Saturday
5 morning when they can come out; the cable company
6 does it, the phone company does it, why can't Ohio
7 American Water, especially with the rates that we are
8 paying?

9 Based upon what I've presented here, the
10 number of people in this room, which I estimate is
11 over 200 people, and the number of opposition
12 comments on the docket, I urge PUCO to significantly
13 reduce the recommended increase to between 5 and 8
14 percent. Thank you.

15 (Applause.)

16 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Thank you.

17 Valerie, is it Kohsman?

18 (Witness sworn.)

19 EXAMINER BULGRIN: State your name and

20 address.

21 MS. KOHSMAN: I just wanted to make one

22 simple --

23 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Ma'am, could you state

24 your name and address.

35

1 MS. KOHSMAN: Oh, state my name. Valerie

2 Kohsman, 3709 Panama Drive, Westerville.

3 - - -

4 VALERIE KOHSMAN

5 presented herself as a public witness, and being

6 first duly sworn, testified as follows:

7 DIRECT TESTIMONY

8 MS. KOSHMAN: I just wanted to make a

9 statement for myself. My observation, and the people

10 I've talked to, is that most of the people here are

11 on fixed incomes or in very tight financial

12 circumstances, and to raise the prices would be

13 almost impossible for most of us.

14 I know from my own experience when I

15 first moved here six years ago, I was paying Columbus

16 water, \$150 for three months' worth of water, I got

17 over here and got a shock of my life. My first bill

18 with my children was \$150 a month.

19 Now, it's come down because now it's just

20 me and my husband, but each time, like a year ago we
21 were told that the last raise that was going was to
22 pay for added services that had already been in place
23 before I even moved here, and then we come back and
24 are finding out now that you're asking for a bigger

1 raise than the last one.

2 And I have one question that in your
3 bulletin when you're telling us about flushing the
4 water out, there was one part nobody mentioned about
5 not -- the only statement we got in the pamphlets
6 that were thrown out was that we were not to turn or
7 use the water in our house for that day.

8 I found a very costly expense because I
9 did not know that I should have turned off my clothes
10 washer water supply and when I went in after the
11 water was turned back on, I opened up my clothes
12 washer and all the water was falling out of it
13 because the pressure when they turned it on blew out
14 the valve in my clothes washer, which I had to call
15 Sears to get it repaired.

16 If I had known I was supposed to have
17 turned it off, I would have done so, but that was not
18 in the explanation of what we should do when you're
19 cleansing out the water.

20 I would sincerely ask PUCO to recertify
21 the people and really listen to what we have to say
22 because I know how hard it's going to be. Just a few
23 more may not seem like much to you, but to a lot of
24 us that could be between what we eat, what we feed

37

1 our children, and what we're able to do to keep
2 working. Thank you very much.

3 (Applause.)

4 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Thank you.

5 Richard, is it Bernsten?

6 FROM THE FLOOR: Could you call a few
7 people up at the same time and swear them in to
8 expedite this? That might help.

9 EXAMINER BULGRIN: I'll tell you what,
10 why don't we have everybody that signed up, if you
11 haven't testified yet, if you want to do that, we'll
12 do that all at one time. Just stand up. That's
13 good.

14 (Witnesses sworn.)

15 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Thank you.

16 - - -

17 RICHARD BERNSTEN

18 presented himself as a public witness, and being
19 first duly sworn, testified as follows:

20 DIRECT TESTIMONY

21 MR. BERNSTEN: Richard Bernsten, 6332

22 Thrasher, Westerville.

23 I used to work in the Borden Building

24 back in the '80s and I went down to a hearing that

1 they had down there, and at that time it was just for
2 the lime in the water and the large amount of the
3 increase, and I remember vaguely that our bill to be
4 paid then was about 10, 15 dollars a month, and they
5 got their increase. And a couple, three people came
6 down there and complained about the bad water.

7 And I went to one other meeting in the
8 early-'90s and I heard the same thing. People
9 brought up black water.

10 And then I went last November I think it
11 was to the Blendon Center up there and there were
12 more people with bad water and I just began to
13 wonder, I said, "I'll bet you these are all the same
14 people."

15 Last November, whenever that meeting was,
16 the man from the water company made a comment that
17 they had to charge more than Columbus and Westerville
18 because they had to pay taxes. Then I got the flier
19 about this meeting and one of the increases that was

20 given was that they had a decrease in volume sold so

21 they had to increase the rates to compensate for it.

22 Two months ago I went to a meeting for

23 the Huber Ridge Association in Blendon and one of the

24 Counsel attorneys made a comment that the water

39

1 company had to charge more than Columbus and
2 Westerville because they didn't have the volume power
3 to buy supplies cheaper.

4 I think there's a law in the books that
5 said that any water company has to make money and
6 they really don't care about expenses. It's all
7 going to come through directly. But really the point
8 is it's not like extra hours or fixing pipe, it's
9 when these companies buy these things, they're paying
10 too much because they don't care.

11 And there's this law that says that
12 Consumers or Citizens Water can basically get what
13 they wanted to and this company, they don't care,
14 they can just buy it because if it does have to be
15 fixed, they'll get more. They've got this investment
16 where they have to make money and even to the point
17 if we use less water because of the rates, we'll
18 still pay more.

19 This is really a political issue. I

20 think the Public Utility Commission really can't do
21 anything about it. They're going to have to go by
22 the law that says regardless of what happens, this
23 company has to make money. And this is a German
24 company, they're probably putting in -- the German

40

1 market or the euro is very expensive, and they're
2 being paid dollars for very cheap.

3 EXAMINER BULGRIN: I'm going to have to
4 cut you off. There's a little misinformation here.
5 If you'd like to testify as to your own experience
6 and your own problems, that's fine.

7 MR. BERNSTEN: Okay. That's all I have.

8 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Okay, thank you.

9 (Applause.)

10 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Charles Drumm.

11 - - -

12 CHARLES DRUMM

13 presented himself as a public witness, and being
14 first duly sworn, testified as follows:

15 DIRECT TESTIMONY

16 MR. DRUMM: Charles Drumm, 3559 Karikal
17 Drive, Westerville.

18 My experience, I worked 36 years in the
19 Columbus Fire Department, the only reason I tell you

20 that is because every year we flush hydrants and so I
21 knew how hydrants need to be flushed. And when I
22 came here and we had water difficulties, bad water, I
23 approached the company and I said, "It looks to me
24 like these guys are not flushing properly, not

1 getting enough volume or duration to clean this
2 system out."

3 When early in my living here we had bad
4 water, a different kind than we've had recently, I
5 installed a water softener and a main filter and a
6 secondary filter and complained to the company that I
7 was having problems.

8 And so then Steve Hensen was the manager
9 of the service department, he came over with one of
10 his workers and looked at what was going on and he
11 said, "You know, this is a shame. You really
12 shouldn't have to have a water treatment plant in
13 your basement," and I agreed with that totally.

14 He said, "The problem we've had is we had
15 an equipment failure and we injected a tremendous
16 amount of iron into the system and that has adhered
17 to the insides of the mains and then it keeps
18 sloughing off." My opinion was they probably could
19 have flushed that out, but they didn't.

20 About the reverse osmosis system, when
21 that was proposed, they held a vote and I think most
22 people didn't know what that was about, maybe they
23 didn't even have the slip of paper that they got on
24 their door or however it was delivered to them, and

42

1 it was voted in. I don't know who supervised that or
2 how it was done, but it looked bad to us and so we
3 were opposed to it.

4 As it turns out, the reverse osmosis
5 system did improve the water tremendously, but I
6 think in the process of this I'm suspicious that the
7 company wanted to install that at the consumers'
8 expense so that they could sell it to another company
9 with this as a selling feature and the company not
10 knowing about the other problems in the mains.

11 When water is tested, they test the water
12 at the outlet of the pumping station. They don't
13 test it at the houses. So I personally think there's
14 probably some deception there and, as one of the
15 previous speakers said, I think if somebody buys a
16 system like that without knowing what they're buying,
17 they should eat the problem.

18 Whoever's invested in that problem -- or,
19 in that company intended to buy it and make money.

20 If they made a bad decision, they lose money. And
21 people here have mutual funds; when you buy one, you
22 might make money, you might lose money. I don't know
23 about the law requiring them to make money.
24 This is a filter before the flushing

43

1 started, before they hired a consultant that told
2 them they needed to flush, which I've been telling
3 them for 20 years. And when they finally adjusted it
4 and flushed properly, this is what happened
5 afterwards. This is better. There's still some
6 sediment in there, but it's better.

7 This is one that came out of the system
8 an hour ago, and my point in showing the filters is
9 if you check the inside of this, you will see that
10 although this one's only been in a month, you can see
11 the brown sediment that's starting to build up again.

12 So where immediately after the flush it
13 was very good, excellent, I was elated, but now it's
14 creeping back. So I'm hoping that PUCO who put the
15 pressure on them to clean this system up will keep
16 the pressure on, and I hope the company will keep
17 making decisions that will keep improving the system,
18 and I hope the PUCO's financial people have the skill
19 and the desire to get in there and keep the company

20 from cooking the books. That's all.

21 (Applause.)

22 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Thank you.

23 Ruth Hutchison.

24 - - -

44

1 RUTH HUTCHINSON

2 presented herself as a public witness, and being
3 first duly sworn, testified as follows:

4 DIRECT TESTIMONY

5 MS. HUTCHINSON: I'm Ruth Hutchinson,
6 5492 Buenos Aires Boulevard right next to the park
7 where your kids slide down the hill in the snow.
8 I've been retired for two years, and
9 Social Security don't pay me enough so I'm working
10 part-time, and what I'm doing is signing people up
11 for free water tests. I had the water test myself
12 since it was free, and today I spent hundreds of
13 dollars getting reverse osmosis underneath my sink to
14 have pure water in my sink. And so I'd like to not
15 have any raises on the water because I got to take
16 care of all this money that I'm spending on reverse
17 osmosis. Thanks.

18 (Applause.)

19 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Thank you.

20 Carol Betts.

21 MS. BETTS: Similar comments have already

22 been entered in the testimony. Thank you.

23 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Thank you.

24 Sue Hale.

45

1 SUE HALE

2 presented herself as a public witness, and being
3 first duly sworn, testified as follows:

4 DIRECT TESTIMONY

5 MS. HALE: I'm Sue Hale and I live at
6 6305 South Sunbury Road in Westerville, in Sunbury
7 Woods. I don't have a recent bill with me.

8 Can you hear me okay?

9 FROM THE FLOOR: No.

10 MS. HALE: Better now?

11 FROM THE FLOOR: Yes.

12 MS. HALE: Okay. I don't have a recent
13 bill with me, plus I'm speaking a bit in
14 generalities, but I do feel that a lot of the points
15 that were brought up by speakers before me were
16 excellent; I'm really glad to have been here to have
17 heard them.

18 However, our water bills here in Ohio
19 with Ohio American Water in the Ohio American Water

20 territory do seem very high. As I understand it, we
21 may be paying as much per month as we'd pay for a
22 quarter if we lived in the city of Columbus water
23 supply and that's really outrageous.
24 I know that where we have a house on the

1 coast of Oregon that's in a community with a small
2 watershed so, you know, that's a smaller group yet
3 than we have here for Ohio American Water, but even
4 for this really small community getting this water
5 from a watershed the cost to us for a year is between
6 300 and 350 dollars and that's all. So I find it
7 very hard to believe that Ohio American has to charge
8 us much as they do.

9 Certainly here we hesitate to even water
10 our plants in the garden unless you happen to have
11 really new ones that you just planted and you know
12 you have to because you're going to lose them if you
13 don't water them. And I have a feeling -- I haven't
14 seen anybody in my neighborhood watering grass at
15 all; none of us can afford it. It's just too
16 expensive. So I am just hoping that my grass is just
17 dormant and not dying.

18 If this company, in fact, is really so
19 much more expensive than others in the region and

20 maybe in the entire state, wouldn't it make sense for
21 PUCO to ask Ohio Water to mend itself from within
22 rather than passing off a rate increase on an
23 already-captive market? We have no choice. If we
24 live here, we have to use that water. So it's not

47

1 like we have any bargaining position whatsoever. So
2 you are our voice. Thank you.

3 (Applause.)

4 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Thank you.

5 Barb Place.

6 FROM THE FLOOR: She's in the restroom.

7 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Okay. I'll take the
8 next one. We'll come back. Richard Hamilton.

9 - - -

10 RICHARD HAMILTON

11 presented himself as a public witness, and being
12 first duly sworn, testified as follows:

13 DIRECT TESTIMONY

14 MR. HAMILTON: Good evening, people. I
15 don't know where to start with this, but I'm just
16 going to be up front with you. I'm not a speaker,
17 but I've definitely been having a lot of problems
18 with the water company and I'm not about to let it
19 slide anymore.

20 I know most of every single one of you in
21 here hates to buy appliances, hot water heaters,
22 water softeners. How many times do you have to have
23 someone go out and get salt for you throughout the
24 wintertime because you don't feel like it or you're

48

1 in some kind of shape you can't deal with it, and by
2 the same token you're paying the high water.

3 Also, I live at 5349 Sedalia Drive in
4 Madison Township, Blacklick Estates. My bill for one
5 month on an average now, and most of the time it's
6 generally right at that believe it or not, is
7 10,000 gallons for three people in the house and
8 \$130 a month.

9 Now, when you start totaling all these
10 numbers, 130 here, now you're talking about \$30 for
11 your water softener and you add that on, now you're
12 talking about also adding the salt that you buy for
13 the thing for the month, now you're also talking
14 about paying the extra money out of your own pocket
15 to back flush the system.

16 Now, I don't know about you people, but
17 \$170 a month is ludicrous, plain and simple, and it's
18 wrong.

19 And not only that, I'm also going to be

20 the first one to stand up and tell Ohio American
21 Water what I think about them for the simple fact
22 that I know that they have been found involved in
23 things that they had no business being involved in.
24 One: I personally spoke with Cliff from

49

1 the Public Utilities Commission and had him in my
2 house going over this with the Ohio American
3 representative; Cliff is a civil engineer. I've been
4 through design engineering. You might mess with one,
5 but you won't mess with two.

6 Bottom line is I knew there was something
7 wrong. When I've got their man come into my house
8 and telling me -- I'm looking at my meter and the
9 man's telling me "Well, you've got a water leak and
10 the meter's not even moving," where it takes Ohio
11 American Water's representative to come in to look at
12 the meter to tell his own man that it's not moving?
13 Now there's something wrong with that picture.

14 Not to mention the fact that specific day
15 I had over 15 adults, not to mention the kids that
16 were there, that looked at that same meter to confirm
17 it. It was not moving.

18 I want to know why my water bill was so
19 high, so we had this meeting with Cliff, and we found

20 out that my meter was running too fast. But they
21 didn't want to check it before, did they?
22 Then when we started doing all the
23 numbers and everything else and trying to find out
24 what else is going on here, we found out that Ohio

1 American Water, Mr. Great Company, was barely under
2 the federal tariff and over the state tariff. Now, I
3 don't know whether you people know what that means or
4 not, but believe me, it's a violation of the law.

5 And we're supposed to believe what the
6 water company says? Now come on, give me a break.
7 Every single one of you in here's smarter than that
8 or you wouldn't be here.

9 I'm sick and tired of it, and I know you
10 are too. When I find a water company that's doing
11 this deliberately to try to make it hard on you, no,
12 I have no respect for them whatsoever. Huh-uh. Not
13 going to work.

14 Now I'm tired of the whole daggone mess.
15 I don't feel we should have to go through the
16 troubles we are, not to mention, like a lot of you
17 other people have already said several times, there
18 are troubles that you have calling in to make
19 appointments, to make adjustments, to schedule their

20 people. They do nothing but give you a hard time. I

21 even had one of them tell me "I'll call you and

22 harass you every four days if I want to, the law says

23 I can." Well, then I'll see you in court.

24 Now, I don't know about you guys, but

51

1 that's just the beginning of what I've got to say,
2 and they have the nerve to ask for a 30 percent
3 increase? Let me tell you, 17 to 18 percent -- or,
4 17 to 18 gram is considered hard water, not so bad
5 but it's hard water, acceptable conditions, and you
6 can adapt to it. But 26, 27, 28 gram? I'm sorry,
7 no. And that's the reason why you're buying
8 appliances right there.

9 It's time this kind of stuff come to an
10 end. Every single one of you need to stand together
11 and do just exactly what you have been and that's why
12 you're here tonight. As a matter of fact, I'm very
13 proud to see this many here as a turnout to make a
14 single statement to Ohio American Water to tell them
15 just like every one of you's been saying, enough is
16 enough. Thank you.

17 (Applause.)

18 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Thank you.

19 Dave Allers.

20 MS. PLACE: I just came back. I think

21 you called my name before.

22 EXAMINER BULGRIN: I'll get you next. As

23 a matter of fact, you can come up and wait here.

24 MR. ALLERS: My name is David Allers,

1 3659 Manila Drive. The last name is A-l-l-e-r-s.

2 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Thank you.

3 - - -

4 DAVID ALLERS

5 presented himself as a public witness, and being

6 first duly sworn, testified as follows:

7 DIRECT TESTIMONY

8 MR. ALLERS: The first gentleman came up

9 speaking about some old business which is the reverse

10 osmosis which they put in because our water was

11 terrible. Put a glass of water out, stuff floating

12 on it, stuff was stuck on the bottom. We agreed for

13 \$25 a month for a set period of time. Time's gone.

14 Now there's \$18 for their mains. I don't

15 know if anybody here's done the math, one of you

16 guys, there's a minimum of 2,300 households on this

17 system, \$18 a month. Do the math. That's \$41,400 a

18 month. Times a year. That's \$496,800 a year in

19 maintenance and filters. My water still sucks.

20 (Applause.)

21 MR. ALLERS: I got an old black truck, if
22 you wash it, if you don't -- if you don't immediately
23 dry it, you have water spots on it that don't come
24 off when you wash it again; you got to scrub it off.

53

1 Now they're asking for more and more money for the
2 increases.

3 I've lived in this area since '71. I
4 stayed. I watched them build the water tower when I
5 was a kid. The wells were all put in in the '60s.
6 The lines were all put in, they're all done. Why do
7 they want more?

8 Electric's going up a little bit, yeah,
9 everything's gone up, but they're going to look us in
10 the eye and tell us that the cost to pump water from
11 the ground is going to go up 30 percent and then to
12 put it back in the creek is going to be 30 percent
13 more?

14 It just keeps going up and up and up and
15 up, and nobody cares.

16 And some of the people here started to
17 say oh, you know, 5 percent, 6 percent, 7 percent,
18 that's acceptable; a little bit. Should be no more
19 money. You know, when you come back --

20 (Applause.)

21 MR. ALLERS: Come back to the point I was
22 making about the money. Half a million dollars a
23 year for filters. I want to be the guy with the
24 contract to sell it to them because somebody's making

54

1 some bucks. You know, they pay their local people,
2 one of them got a \$41,000 bonus last year that works
3 for this company, for in this area. That all comes
4 off our backs. I don't get a \$41,000 bonus for what
5 I do; probably none of you guys do. We're all
6 working-class people here.

7 But half a million dollars in filters,
8 30 percent more for your water. Everybody's grass is
9 brown. I'll water once a month so it won't die. You
10 know, we're trying to stop a rate increase. To be
11 completely honest with everybody here, you guys
12 should be lowering our water rates, not increasing
13 them. Thank you.

14 (Applause.)

15 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Michelle Baum, if you
16 could come up as well.

17 - - -

18 BARBARA PLACE

19 presented herself as a public witness, and being

20 first duly sworn, testified as follows:

21 DIRECT TESTIMONY

22 MS. PLACE: My name is Barbara Place. I

23 live at 3667 Alpena Road, Madison Township, Blacklick

24 Estates. I'm so sick that I can't see straight.

55

1 It's been 38 years that I've lived there.

2 This is my water bill for September

3 5th, \$131.97. Come on. I'm on a fixed income. In

4 fact, in our household everyone is disabled. I have

5 MS, my husband has muscular dystrophy, we're taking

6 care of my brother, who has Alzheimer's, and our

7 autistic son. You know, we can't afford it. We have

8 46 prescriptions that go out every month. My

9 electric bill was \$229 on the budget and 213 gas on

10 the budget. We can't do it, you know. It's enough.

11 The water's so horrible that if you put

12 it in the pan, and we have to have a water softener

13 of course, but if you put the water in a pan and dump

14 it out and you don't dry that pan, you run your

15 finger across it and when you bring it up, it's got

16 white powder on it.

17 FROM THE FLOOR: Yep. Yep.

18 MS. PLACE: If I wanted to make some

19 extra money, I think I should just gather some of

20 that, maybe I could sell it on the street.

21 And I want to know, 38 years, what's that

22 doing to my stomach? If that's doing that to that

23 pan, my God, I've been living with this for 38 years,

24 it's -- I'm bound to die of cancer; I've got to. I

56

1 have no other choice.

2 That's all I have to say. Thank you.

3 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Richard Westfall will
4 be next if you want to come up.

5 - - -

6 MICHELLE BAUM

7 presented herself as a public witness, and being
8 first duly sworn, testified as follows:

9 DIRECT TESTIMONY

10 MS. BAUM: Good evening. My name is
11 Michelle Baum, 3661 Managua Drive.

12 Monday I received a current bill from
13 Ohio American Water for \$66.97. That doesn't sound
14 like a whole lot to some of you, but when I
15 stopped -- I stopped today and I wrote down, let's
16 see, on the weekdays Monday through Friday my husband
17 and my son are gone all day, I'm home alone, just me
18 and my dogs. I lay in bed all day; I'm disabled.

19 The weekends we're mostly gone. My

20 husband showers everyday; thank you, David. Five
21 minutes every day whether he wants to or not. My son
22 showers every other day or when he has baseball;
23 that's mandatory. I shower three or four times a
24 week, yes.

1 We do five loads of dishes a week. I do
2 four or five loads of laundry a week, but only if we
3 have an absolutely full load. Last month we watered
4 our lawn twice, nine or ten minutes each time. I
5 take the water from when I wash my pans, I put it in
6 milk jugs and I take it out and I water my garden and
7 my flowers; that's the only way I'm going to water my
8 garden and my flowers. We buy bottled water to
9 drink, so that tiny little bit of water that we use
10 every month cost us \$67.

11 Now, I wrote a letter to the PUCO and to
12 Governor Strickland, got a letter back from Governor
13 Strickland saying he would send my letter on to the
14 PUCO. I got contacted by one of the news stations
15 asking me for an interview about the letter. I'm not
16 a public speaker, but when I get a bill that says
17 \$66.97 and 28 cents of that is a late-payment charge,
18 and I said "Wait a minute, if I get the bill Monday
19 and mail it Tuesday, how can I have a late-payment

20 charge?"

21 So I called them today. And the lady

22 said, "Well, ma'am, you overpay your bill." If I get

23 a \$58 bill, I send in \$60. So because I send in too

24 much, I'm getting a late-payment charge for sending

58

1 in too much. That is what they told me today.

2 Honest, that was OAW today.

3 They said this is the third bill in a

4 month or third time in a row that I have gotten late

5 charges put on my bill because I paid too much on my

6 bill. She says, "Oh, I'm sorry. Well, it's only 28

7 cents." I said, "Ma'am."

8 My mother and father living in Columbus,

9 every three months they were getting a bill, 50, 51

10 dollars. I showed my mom this bill for \$66.97. I

11 said, "Mom, this is one month." She says, "You guys

12 are never home. How can you use that much water?" I

13 said, "I don't know." You know, "Ask OAW."

14 Well, I asked the lady today. I said,

15 "It may not be much, but that 34 cents, that 20

16 cents, and that 28 cents that I've been overpaying

17 these last three months, I'd like that put back on my

18 bill." "Oh, we'll do that, but you still have to

19 send it in on this bill and then we'll refund you on

20 the next bill."

21 And I said, "So what about next month?

22 This is 66.97, I was planning on sending in \$67."

23 She says, "Oh, I wouldn't do that, ma'am. There's a

24 computer glitch that's charging you too much if you

1 send in an overpayment."

2 Now, how many people in Huber Ridge are
3 paying 28 cents, 34 cents, 64 cents every month? I
4 hadn't even noticed it until last month. How many
5 times have I made a late-payment charge because I've
6 overpaid my bill?

7 I started working for Westerville back in
8 '86, I planned on working for them for 40 years.
9 That's why my husband and I bought a home in Huber
10 Ridge, I was three minutes to work, he's two minutes
11 to work. Well, God had other plans. I got disabled
12 at work. I can't work anymore.

13 And I have given serious consideration --
14 when we bought our house, we said, "This is where
15 we're going to live forever." I've given serious
16 consideration for the last two years of moving out
17 because I get a thousand dollars a month to live on
18 and I can't keep giving another 20 percent, another
19 30 percent, another 40 percent. I can't do it. And

20 I don't know anybody in this room who can do it.

21 It's just not fair.

22 (Applause.)

23 - - -

24

60

RICHARD WESTFALL

presented himself as a public witness, and being
first duly sworn, testified as follows:

DIRECT TESTIMONY

MR. WESTFALL: Richard Westfall, and I
live at 3610 Carthage Court.

Pretty much what everybody has already
said was basically some of the things that I want to
say too, but we've noticed in our neighborhood since
we've been there, we've been there now 11, maybe 12
years, and I first noticed when we first came there
the cost of water was three times what we were
paying -- what Sharon was paying in Columbus, twice
what I was paying in Worthington at that time, and
that was 13 years ago.

Well, there's a number of neighbors that
made a comment to Columbus about that, I believe -- I
don't think it was PUCO, but we went to another
agency and they actually came out with some

20 conservative things like we were putting in -- we had
21 to buy these little kits and we were putting half our
22 tanks -- closing half our tanks off with a piece of
23 plastic or a piece of rubber just so that we wouldn't
24 use as much water trying to reduce it.

61

1 We even put jugs filled with sand and
2 water and everything else in there, but that didn't
3 do any good because what we noticed was in that
4 period of time in the 11 years we lived here it's --
5 the company's been sold at least three or four times,
6 and each time, being a private company, larger and
7 larger firms with bigger and bigger expansion of
8 firms and coverages.

9 It seems like the costs have just doubled
10 or quadrupled just based on the fact that they got
11 bigger and bigger. Now, being that this is a
12 worldwide organization that owns our utility company,
13 it just seems like it's totally out of hand.

14 Well, I'm not a public accountant, but I
15 didn't know how far out of hand it was until my wife
16 passed me over something that your people are
17 investigating and have completed the investigation,
18 and it's creative; their balance sheets and that and
19 what they want in the way of reserves. Seems like

20 everything is a reserve.

21 I kind of wondered, where are all these

22 reserves going to? Where are all these depreciations

23 going to? They're definitely not paying any taxes in

24 the United States. They're definitely not somehow

1 creating income on top of income based on the
2 reserves, because there is no way these contingencies
3 can have this amount of reserves being used up.

4 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Let's stick with what
5 you know.

6 MR. WESTFALL: I guess what I'm saying is
7 PUCO has done the investigation. We certainly don't
8 need any more price increases. We're aware, like
9 this one gentleman said, there is some creative
10 activities going on in the way of trying to get
11 profits, and they're getting the profits out of one
12 particular captive audience and that's the few
13 people -- or, these people that have wells that are
14 dependent on these systems, and these people are
15 paying the price for this capitalization of these
16 larger companies.

17 In my estimation it's something that PUCO
18 should be standing pretty firm in opposition to. If
19 not, we have to look at the OCC to do it for us

20 because we're sure as hell not going to do it

21 independently.

22 (Applause.)

23 - - -

24

63

1 SHARON WESTFALL

2 presented herself as a public witness, and being

3 first duly sworn, testified as follows:

4 DIRECT TESTIMONY

5 MS. WESTFALL: Hi. My name is Sharon

6 Westfall. I live at 3610 Carthage Court, and I've

7 lived here for 11 years, and it's ridiculous whenever

8 you -- I am fired up, not fired up enough to get the

9 police officer to drag me out of here, but it's

10 ridiculous whenever you have to say "Don't flush the

11 toilet every time." "Take a bath every other day."

12 My mother, who lives in Columbus, there's

13 six people in her family, little babies, little kids,

14 her water bill for three months isn't even half of

15 what ours is for one month. Ours runs about \$130 a

16 month. It's ridiculous.

17 You can't plant flowers, you can't take a

18 shower, have to fuss at your kid. I've got one kid;

19 "You been in the shower for 20 minutes, get out."

20 It's a constant battle whenever -- you can't even --
21 there's people in here, this is ridiculous that they
22 have to worry about eating and paying a water bill.
23 Obviously, whenever I called about it I
24 was told that you guys built a new plant and you've

64

1 got this and you've got all this new stuff. If
2 Columbus can do it, you guys need to downsize a
3 little bit, go into a different building or
4 something, because it's ridiculous. It's just
5 ridiculous.

6 And anybody to work at Ohio American
7 Water and sit up here and not feel guilty for what
8 you're doing to everyone in this room, I would be
9 hiding my eyes, my face. I would be ashamed.

10 (Applause.)

11 MS. WESTFALL: I don't know how anybody
12 can sit here and feel good about theirself at night
13 knowing what they're doing to people that's out here
14 working hard and trying to eat and survive.

15 And to pay these outrageous water bills,
16 you can't drink the water. He's forever more
17 changing the water filter; it's black. There's
18 problems here. You guys need to look at your plant,
19 downsize, do something, instead of sticking it to all

20 of us in this room.

21 (Applause.)

22 COMMISSIONER ROBERTO: Thank you for your

23 comments.

24 MR. WESTFALL: She can't drink the water

65

1 either, that's why she buys this (indicating).

2 MS. WESTFALL: Yes. It's just

3 ridiculous. I know everybody has to work, I mean

4 everybody has to work and make a living, but to be

5 able to sit up here and show your guys's face or

6 anybody's face who works for Ohio American Water,

7 what they're doing to these people here --

8 COMMISSIONER ROBERTO: Ma'am, that's what

9 I wanted to clarify.

10 MS. WESTFALL: -- it's a shame.

11 COMMISSIONER ROBERTO: We are with the

12 Public Utilities Commission, so we work for the state

13 to review Ohio American's request for a rate

14 increase. We're here to hear from you so that as we

15 review their increase, we can make a better judgment.

16 So I just wanted to clarify in case

17 anybody else had misinterpreted that we, in fact,

18 represent the Public Utilities Commission and we are

19 entrusted with balancing their request against all

20 the public needs and that's why we're here this

21 evening, because we do need to hear this from you.

22 MS. WESTFALL: So I apologize.

23 COMMISSIONER ROBERTO: No; thank you. I

24 really -- I appreciate your comments. Thank you very

1 much.

2 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Dan Loy.

3 FROM THE FLOOR: I just wanted to ask, do

4 we still have a Consumers' Counsel?

5 MS. HOTZ: Yes.

6 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Yes, and they're here

7 tonight.

8 Ann, do you guys have a table in the

9 back?

10 MS. HOTZ: We'll be back here. We don't

11 have a table in the back.

12 OCC REPRESENTATIVE: Yes, we have a table

13 in the back.

14 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Okay, there's a table

15 in the back that the Consumers' Counsel has.

16 FROM THE FLOOR: Thank you.

17 EXAMINER BULGRIN: I'm sorry. Go ahead.

18 - - -

19 DAN LOY

20 presented himself as a public witness, and being

21 first duly sworn, testified as follows:

22 DIRECT TESTIMONY

23 MR. LOY: All right. My name is Dan Loy.

24 My address is 6338 Hibiscus Court and that's over in

1 Sunbury Woods.

2 I've been here almost 20 years. Some of
3 you may know me. I'm an insurance agent, so I've got
4 to deal with the state on a regular basis with the
5 Ohio Department of Insurance, but it's a little bit
6 different than what we have to deal here with the
7 PUCO.

8 My wife works for another little company
9 some of you probably are not real happy with from
10 time to time, and that's AEP. So, you know, as I
11 stand up here -- I still pay the same rates as you do
12 too, by the way, for electricity, so I don't get a
13 break for that.

14 I guess I've heard a lot of all the
15 issues that went through here and there's a lot of
16 frustration and I want to tell you first off I feel
17 so bad for a lot of you folks on fixed incomes. I've
18 been blessed and we have the means to make our bills
19 and, you know, I'll be honest with you, if it doesn't

20 change when my daughter graduates here in five years,

21 I probably will not be in Sunbury Woods anymore.

22 But there are some impacts on this and

23 one of the things, this is just a sidebar and nothing

24 to the counsel of the water company, but I find it

68

1 interesting they send you to this hearing instead of
2 having management sitting here listening to us.

3 Does anybody else find that interesting,
4 that they send an attorney instead of having their
5 own management come listen to us?

6 (Applause.)

7 MR. LOY: Years ago, when I first moved
8 in, reverse osmosis came out and one of the things
9 was at that time -- of course it's not your company
10 now, it's been sold -- but we were promised and it
11 was promised to us that if we voted for the reverse
12 osmosis, that the system would change the quality of
13 the water and that we would not have any more
14 problems. That was a promise that was made by the
15 water company at that time. Of course now they don't
16 have to live by the promises made in the past, I
17 understand that.

18 Fortunately for us, our water quality
19 improved immensely. I mean, we had problems like

20 everybody else with the minerals in your hot water
21 tank, we had to replace that every two years. We had
22 the softener. We took our softener out and our water
23 quality is pretty decent. I can say that for the
24 water we receive, it's fairly decent. It still has

69

1 some hardness to it. If you wash your car, you've
2 got to be very careful because it will spot your car,
3 but it's feasible. We can drink with it, shower and
4 bathe with it, it's not a major problem.

5 But one of the concerns I have is what
6 are we actually asking for? When we voted in on the
7 reverse osmosis, this was to solve all our problems.
8 Now we need more money to solve more problems.

9 I've been in my home going on 20 years.
10 You know how many times in 20 years they've come to
11 replace my meter? Zero. I don't know about you, but
12 anybody that's got a car that's 20 years old, I think
13 you probably had it in the shop a few times, haven't
14 you?

15 I've had two furnaces put into my home in
16 20 years, but I have yet to have somebody come and
17 say "Your meter may be needing replaced" or "It may
18 need recalibrated." And I don't know any mechanical
19 device that doesn't need either checked,

20 recalibrated, or replaced in 20 years, but that's not

21 what they're doing.

22 The second thing is the question is where

23 the money goes to. We look at maintenance. Well, we

24 all know one thing, they're all selling you this

1 protection plan so that you can protect yourselves if
2 your own water line breaks. They're not going to
3 come and do anything for you if your water line
4 breaks.

5 Now, I've been here for 20 years, there
6 has been one little section of the main line that
7 broke. Have they updated any of the other section?
8 No. I have not seen any updates of the section
9 whatsoever. We're still running with the line that's
10 been there 20-plus years ago, and now maybe it was
11 done in the 21st year before I moved in, I don't
12 know, but I have not seen it in 20 years. None of
13 the pipes have been updated whatsoever.

14 The question I have is it's got to be
15 fixed-cost maintenance at this point in time. You
16 amortize on the business for a number of years what
17 your costs are going to be to do repairs, so they
18 should have amortized over a number of years what
19 their fixed costs are going to be to replace this so

20 they wouldn't have to come out and ask us for a large

21 increase; it doesn't appear they've done that.

22 I don't see that we're getting a lot of

23 service out of the company whatsoever. Yes, we get

24 the product provided to us on a monthly basis, in

1 some cases it's good, in other cases most of them
2 here you hear them talk it is not very good product
3 they're putting out.

4 The question is do we have a right to
5 hold them accountable for the product they produce to
6 us? Do you have the right to hold them accountable?
7 If they get the rate increases, are they going to be
8 held accountable or is this going to be taking place
9 over and over again where they come back and ask for
10 more but the product doesn't change? We've been
11 promised so many times that this would be drinkable
12 water, you could use it for your clothes washer, and
13 it just doesn't get done.

14 I want to close this with one thing --
15 and by the way, costwise we're running probably
16 50 percent higher than what it would be in the city
17 of Columbus or in Westerville also.

18 But I want to close this, there was a
19 very famous case, and being attorneys I'm sure you're

20 familiar with this, but it involved Abraham Lincoln
21 and Douglas, and this case involved the Mississippi
22 River.

23 At that time Douglas was representing the
24 very wealthy boat owners who plied the river going

1 north and south. Well, it seemed the boat owners
2 didn't want a bridge put across the east and west
3 route, and the reason was they were making so much
4 money off the north-south route they didn't want to
5 change it whatsoever. Well, I say that's the water
6 company. We're the people that want to go east and
7 west and we want to find a way to make it
8 cost-effective.

9 The question that Abraham Lincoln asked
10 before he closed was: Do those who want to go north
11 and south have more rights than those who want to go
12 east and west? And I ask you, do those who want to
13 make a profit have more rights than us as consumers?
14 Thank you.

15 (Applause.)

16 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Pamela Sperling. And
17 then Eleanor Murano will be next.

18 FROM THE FLOOR: How many more you got?

19 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Quite a few. There

20 are sign-up sheets in the back. There's a petition
21 that I prepared, if you need to leave, you can
22 sign -- see the gals in the back and there's a sheet
23 that you can sign if you don't have anything
24 particular to report. I mean, we hear what you're

73

1 saying, that your rates are too high.

2 FROM THE FLOOR: And the water's bad.

3 EXAMINER BULGRIN: But we do need to hear

4 if you yourself are having water quality problems. I

5 don't really need to hear if it's somebody else. I

6 need to hear about your own personal experience,

7 that's really what we need to hear you testify about.

8 So is Pamela Sperling here?

9 How about Eleanor Murano?

10 Nick Lugin.

11 MR. LUGIN: Yes, sir.

12 EXAMINER BULGRIN: And Dennis Fletcher

13 after that if you want to come up.

14 - - -

15 NICK LUGIN

16 presented himself as a public witness, and being

17 first duly sworn, testified as follows:

18 DIRECT TESTIMONY

19 MR. LUGIN: I'll be brief. Nick Lugin,

20 L-u-g-i-n, 6084 Paris Boulevard.

21 You said to speak specifically about

22 water quality. I don't have any real problems with

23 the water quality of the water I receive, but it is

24 the quality that I expect. If you invite someone

74

1 over to your house for dinner, you set a clean plate
2 down in front of them; you would never set a dirty
3 plate.

4 There's people here, I'm amazed at what
5 I'm hearing about the quality of water and I will
6 say, Dick, that my water is fine, but I want to stand
7 behind the people who don't have the same privilege
8 as I do.

9 I get what I pay for. I expect clean
10 water, and that's what I receive. But you know what,
11 we average \$107 a month and we have a family, I guess
12 about four of us now, that's more than I want to pay
13 for clean water. I can't imagine paying prices 107
14 and above for water that is subquality, and I think
15 that's what everyone's saying here.

16 And I've taken petitions around the
17 neighborhood, as my wife has done also and, you know,
18 I heard people talk about the quality of water and I
19 was thinking, Well, you know, is this an isolated

20 case? And I see here this evening that it is not,
21 and I do feel it's a shame that this has been allowed
22 to continue and it's going on.
23 I'm encouraged -- I walked up here this
24 evening and said to my wife "I bet you there will

75

1 hardly be anyone here." I'm encouraged to see the
2 fact that there are many people here. And PUCO and
3 American Water utility company, I just want to say
4 that if this voice isn't heard, your ears are not
5 open. Thank you.

6 (Applause.)

7 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Is it Tiana Edwards?

8 You're going to be on deck.

9 - - -

10 DENNIS FLETCHER

11 presented himself as a public witness, and being
12 first duly sworn, testified as follows:

13 DIRECT TESTIMONY

14 MR. FLETCHER: My name's Dennis Fletcher.

15 I live at 3750 Caracas on the Hilltop I guess it's
16 called.

17 Anyway, my story parallels what people
18 are saying about water quality. I happen to be one
19 of those homes that is at the end of the trunk line

20 where they actually test once a year, at least that's

21 been their average.

22 My last water test was not quite three

23 weeks ago. I got the report back, very graciously,

24 nice pretty letter with a business card of some

1 big-shot VP, whatever.

2 Anyway, even though the water test came
3 back with no lead, it had the maximum permissible
4 amount of iron. This is the iron in my water. This
5 is sediment from 50 gallons of water, one water tank.
6 And my water tank is only four months old.

7 Now, I could ball this up and throw it
8 and hurt you. Iron's kind of heavy, you know.
9 Almost half a pound here.

10 At any rate, that's just my water quality
11 issue, and my water is such that we don't drink it,
12 we buy bottled water or we don't drink water at all.
13 I have a couple of cats which are also on bottled
14 water. I refuse to treat them to something that I
15 would not drink myself.

16 I've lived here for about ten years, a
17 little over ten years, and like everybody's saying,
18 the prices go up, up, and up. It seems there is no
19 maintenance, at least none that I've seen. It seems

20 the only thing I see is month to month like clockwork

21 that little pickup truck going out with "Ohio

22 American Water" on the side shutting people's water

23 off, and you could just about set your watch by it.

24 Fortunately, I'm not one who has been

1 without water, being a disabled cancer patient also
2 living on a fixed income. I can't afford what
3 they're charging me now, let alone what they're going
4 to charge or what they're going to try to charge.

5 To keep it brief, and that's pretty much
6 the points I want to make, especially this stuff
7 (indicating), is that I don't mind paying good money
8 for a good product, I'll even pay more for a good
9 product in some cases, but I refuse to pay top dollar
10 for bargain-basement water.

11 Sediment on the pots and pans. I don't
12 have a dishwasher, I hand wash dishes, and like
13 everybody says, let it dry on its own, it's like you
14 have talcum powder in your pans. And you want to
15 cook with those? Do you want to eat stuff out of
16 those pans?

17 So I'm all for a rate decrease or some
18 kind of penalty to impose upon Ohio American Water
19 for lack of due diligence at the very least.

20 (Applause.)

21 MR. FLETCHER: Who cares that they

22 know -- they knew before they even bought the company

23 we're well past due. They knew the infrastructure

24 was at or beyond its reasonable lifetime. Yet they

78

1 come in, buy the company, and one increase after
2 another, bam, bam, bam, and now they want 36 percent.
3 It would take me ten years of salary increases to
4 make that kind of an increase.

5 And being an information technology
6 director by trade, you know, I'm not a brilliant guy,
7 but I'm not an idiot either.

8 I would like to see some form of
9 legislation enacted or some kind of rules or laws,
10 whatever you want to call it, put into this rate
11 review process that their rate increases be based on
12 merit to where they can earn a rate increase.
13 Demonstrate to us what you have done to warrant this
14 increase and I'll kick it out, I'll pay it.

15 But just to say, "Hey, hey brother, fork
16 it over. Trust us." They're in Germany. What do
17 they know about Columbus, Ohio, Westerville, Huber
18 Ridge, Sunbury Woods? They couldn't care less.

19 So I'd say I've never seen the people in

20 this country so pissed about this stuff.

21 (Applause.)

22 MR. FLETCHER: Anybody wants a sample,

23 I've got plenty.

24 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Hang on one second.

1 Ann?

2 MS. HOTZ: Yeah. Mr. Fletcher, would you
3 like to enter that as an exhibit, that bag?

4 MR. FLETCHER: I'll be glad to give it to
5 you right now.

6 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Brian Butterfield will
7 be next. Go ahead.

8 - - -

9 TIANA EDWARDS

10 presented herself as a public witness, and being
11 first duly sworn, testified as follows:

12 DIRECT TESTIMONY

13 MS. EDWARDS: It's Tiana Edwards, spelled
14 differently, 3566 Makassar Drive.

15 I am a first year new buyer on Makassar
16 Drive. Pam is my neighbor. I really don't know what
17 I wanted to say when I came here tonight, all I know
18 is I was born in Westerville, native on State Street,
19 but I moved to Huber Ridge and the water bill was

20 incredible. I never really had to worry about water

21 before.

22 There's two people in my home. I just

23 got a text our water bill's 124.96 this month. We're

24 never home. I work at a hair salon, my hair's done

1 at work.

2 FROM THE FLOOR: Maybe it's your cats.

3 MS. EDWARDS: What I noticed more is,

4 being a native of Westerville, it's really sad to

5 look around my neighborhood and see a load of empty

6 houses. My own daughter and her husband moved out of

7 Huber Ridge last year because of the utilities. It's

8 a shame.

9 And it's really the only community in

10 Westerville that's barren. You can usually go about

11 six houses before you see an empty one. I think

12 that's very sad, and it's because of lack of use,

13 it's because of lack of residents, because you can't

14 really afford to be here.

15 I love my home. I fell in love with it,

16 that's why I moved in, but I can't stay much longer

17 if it keeps going up, and that saddens my heart to no

18 end. I don't want to say anything else about it, but

19 we need to keep our community together. We're losing

20 residents.

21 I've lost -- I moved in May 15th last

22 year, I've had five neighbors move in my surrounding

23 house. I'm beginning to get a little paranoid. I'm

24 starting to think it's me, but they've all said "We

81

1 love Westerville, but we're going to move to where
2 the water's pretty much included on our utility bill
3 at a cheaper rate." So I think it's a little sad,
4 and that's really all I have to say.

5 (Applause.)

6 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Robin Thomas will be
7 next.

8 - - -

9 BRIAN BUTTERFIELD

10 presented himself as a public witness, and being
11 first duly sworn, testified as follows:

12 DIRECT TESTIMONY

13 MR. BUTTERFIELD: My name is Brian
14 Butterfield. I'm at 3701 Batavia Court here in
15 Blendon Township. Just a few points that I wanted to
16 bring up.

17 Myself and my family's been in this
18 township for over 35 years and so we do have some
19 history. I applaud everybody who showed up here

20 tonight to be seen or heard. Based on the founding

21 values of our country this is the way things are

22 supposed to get done, so we'll see if those values

23 are upheld here tonight.

24 Some of this stuff obviously, if you

1 follow The Columbus Dispatch, we're looking at the
2 highest unemployment rates in our country in over 20
3 years, we're looking at the highest, I'm sorry,
4 inflation rates, people on fixed incomes, and we just
5 can't afford this anymore.

6 My personal home, my water's not
7 horrible, but it's because I installed a water filter
8 in my home. Just like everybody else, when the
9 reverse osmosis came in, I did have -- or, my family
10 did have the water softener removed. Water quality
11 wasn't great, so we did install a whole-house water
12 filter.

13 And I will let you know right now you
14 have my name, you have my address, I have a filter
15 that's currently in place that's been there two or
16 three months that's due for a change. I will let the
17 PUCO or I will let the Consumers' Counsel come in and
18 they can physically remove that filter and analyze
19 it.

20 I said my water's not horrible, but when
21 you change that filter, you can scrape the gunk off
22 of it. If you would like to come in, if you would
23 like to get that filter and include it in evidence,
24 if you would like to analyze the gunk that builds up

83

1 on that filter, you'll agree, and you can tell me if
2 they've earned their rate increase. I don't think
3 they have.

4 I'm hearing stories of everybody, and I
5 know the same thing, Columbus pays less, Westerville
6 pays less. At this point in time I would recommend
7 that you tell Ohio American Water to go talk to
8 Westerville, go talk to Columbus, and find out how
9 they're doing it at a much lower price. This is just
10 ridiculous.

11 (Applause.)

12 MR. BUTTERFIELD: Somebody else mentioned
13 Abraham Lincoln earlier, and it just kind of brought
14 to mind here that speech he gave over a hundred years
15 ago that said this is a government for the people, by
16 the people, and of the people, and I pray that that
17 will stand up here tonight as well, that it's not a
18 government of big business, by big business, and for
19 big business. It's for us.

20 And if you guys will stand up to what
21 that was all about when Abraham Lincoln said and
22 guaranteed us over a hundred-plus years ago, you
23 know, that would be greatly appreciated.
24 Ultimately, your pamphlet here that I

84

1 picked up tonight says "The PUCO is working for you."

2 I encourage you to prove that. Come and get my

3 filter if you would like, analyze it, and see if

4 they've earned their rate increase and just simply

5 tell them "No, we're not going to let you financially

6 molest these people anymore." Thank you.

7 (Applause.)

8 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Thank you.

9 James Welch is next.

10 - - -

11 ROBIN THOMAS

12 presented herself as a public witness, and being

13 first duly sworn, testified as follows:

14 DIRECT TESTIMONY

15 MS. THOMAS: I'm Robin Thomas. I live at

16 5601 Spohn Drive in Blendon Township, Huber Ridge.

17 Fifteen, 16 years ago I was the one who

18 was giving up all of my time like the people are this

19 time for the water. I was a new resident then, and

20 we had brown water. I didn't have a softener in my
21 house when I bought it, and I was responsible for the
22 reverse osmosis system.

23 I was the -- after the rate increase was
24 granted under certain terms by the PUCO I was the

1 consumer representative that was on the panel with
2 Poggemeyer Design Group, the water company, the Ohio
3 Consumers' Counsel, and the PUCO representatives.

4 Blacklick opted out of the reverse
5 osmosis plan, and that's why they have the water they
6 have without the help of it, but our reverse osmosis
7 hasn't been working since the new company came in
8 because my ceiling over my bathtub, which I couldn't
9 bring with me, is orange. We paint it with Kilz
10 every six months. And that orange is on any of the
11 white appliances that use water from buildup, even
12 with regular cleaning. I clean my house regularly.

13 My glasses that I bought brand-new after
14 we finally had the reverse osmosis working, because
15 the buildup in the dish water with the mineral on
16 your glassware, even the Jet Dry doesn't help and
17 your glasses all get cloudy. When you water your
18 plants, the dirt turns white from the minerals in the
19 water, and all of that is coming back to haunt us.

20 That bag that he just brought in with the
21 rust in it or the iron in it, that's mineral buildup
22 as well, and that means that the reverse osmosis
23 system is either failing or it isn't being used
24 properly.

1 Because my line was one that the PUCO did
2 order to be looped back in the other rate case in
3 '92, and after that our water, once the buildup in
4 the lines had flushed out over a period of time, was
5 very good. And people who were still on dead-end
6 mains I know still had some problems, but it wasn't
7 in the magnitude that it had been when we first moved
8 here.

9 And so it disturbs me to see that people
10 are having to go through what we went through all
11 over again because it's very time-consuming and you
12 don't get paid. I was a stay-at-home mom at the
13 time. I work now. I don't have time to fight the
14 water company. We shouldn't have to.

15 I was like the woman who was up here, I
16 grew up in Westerville, I never thought about water
17 before I bought my house here. I asked my dad after
18 we moved here, I said, "How much water do you use?"
19 He said, "I use what I need." We can't do that here.

20 We need water, but we have to monitor our water in
21 order to afford it because anybody with kids knows
22 that they don't monitor their water.
23 So I guess I just wanted to share that
24 yes, the quality was bad, it did get better, we're

87

1 still paying for reverse osmosis on our bill, and I
2 think that that's their windfall because by stopping
3 using it, they got a rate increase right off the bat.
4 Now they want more.

5 (Applause.)

6 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Thank you.

7 MR. FLETCHER: Excuse me. One thing I
8 should say about that water test and the minerals I
9 turned in, the iron content in that test was at the
10 maximum permissible amount by law, 3.8 micrograms per
11 milliliter I think was the measurement, and it was
12 rated or listed that they -- it warranted attention.
13 I would be very surprised if it never saw any
14 attention, and it's already at or above maximum.

15 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Thank you.

16 Mr. Welch.

17 While mr. Welch is getting up, next would
18 be Don Hight.

19 - - -

20 JAMES WELCH

21 presented himself as a public witness, and being

22 first duly sworn, testified as follows:

23 DIRECT TESTIMONY

24 MR. WELCH: James Welch, W-e-l-c-h, 5460

1 Acapulco Place.

2 Actually, you've been limiting the
3 testimony tonight to personal experiences. I've got
4 about six or seven pages here of actually reviewing
5 the docket case and a lot of the information, a lot
6 of discrepancies I see, a lot of facts Ohio American
7 Water has presented is not accurate I could go over
8 and over and over on, but that's not been allowed
9 tonight.

10 So what I do have here is a little visual
11 aide. There's numbers on them glasses. Do you see a
12 visible difference in the water itself?

13 EXAMINER BULGRIN: No, not --

14 MR. WELCH: There's three samples, one
15 was taken from a residence on Makassar, one was
16 Columbus, one was Westerville. If you don't see a
17 visible difference, there under the letters A, B, and
18 C is where the water came from. You can peel them
19 off and see the difference. If you can't see the

20 difference in water, why is there a huge difference

21 in our prices?

22 (Applause.)

23 MR. WELCH: Back when the Ohio American

24 Water took over, I believe it was '02/'03 they bought

1 it, just to go over some facts, I can't do my speech,
2 but Citizens Utilities had this water treatment plant
3 for about 14 years. Citizens Utilities applied for
4 three rate increases in 14 years, one of them was
5 approved in '98, one was approved in '94, one was in
6 '90. Since Ohio American took over in '03, they've
7 had three rate increases, '03, '06, and now in '07.
8 Same time span -- 14 years and 5 years.

9 I moved in where I am currently residing
10 at in '00, shortly before. Ohio American Water
11 reverse osmosis system was in place then. We was on
12 our second leg of the approved rate increase. I
13 don't remember what the figure was, I guess it
14 wouldn't make a difference at this point.

15 The third leg came around and we paid a
16 little more for the reverse osmosis. We are now
17 paying more for the maintenance and upkeep than we
18 did to buy the system. How can the maintenance be
19 more than the system purchased?

20 MR. FLETCHER: Because it's broken.

21 MR. WELCH: The gentleman said, half a

22 million dollars spent.

23 I've got water bills I can show when the

24 first rate increase Ohio American talked about was

90

1 '03, they said the average bill for their residents
2 was 8 CCF. That's talking about not the bill
3 pricewise, we're talking about usage. Then in '06
4 they said the average usage was 7 CCF. Now they say
5 the average is 6 CCF.

6 Why is it going backwards? Because the
7 people can't afford it. They've cut back beyond what
8 they can control, and I have done that myself.

9 The expense for water -- I've got three
10 toilets in my house, they're all low flushes,
11 showerheads are low-flow, on and on. We went through
12 and spent \$1,800 for a front-load washer, uses half
13 of it. My water bill is still at 7 CCF, 1 CCF above
14 what they're saying the average is, approximately 80
15 dollars.

16 I have a Columbus bill with me that I
17 have that uses 24 CCF in three months, their bill is
18 \$89. What they pay in three months I pay in one
19 month. They use 8 CCF as an average, mine was 7 CCF.

20 What's the difference?

21 They're mad about the figures and

22 figures -- I guess I can't go through all that.

23 I can tell you thank you all for writing

24 in, the last rate increase in '06 there was 187

1 entries in the docketing information that was total
2 throughout the whole rate increase including the
3 finalized. Currently as of yesterday there's 207
4 entries as of yesterday.

5 There's 132 correspondence entries, many
6 of them are multiple so I can tell you there's
7 probably 200, 207 letters in to the PUCO in this
8 docket information used on this rate increase. They
9 need to listen. We're here for a reason.

10 If you want to -- the CDC, I'm only going
11 to say one thing that's part of it anyway, the Center
12 for Disease Control, the CDC, defines an epidemic as
13 7.7 percent of a specific population, or the
14 occurrence of more cases than expected in a given
15 area or among a specific group of people over a
16 particular period of time.

17 The U.S. government recently defined the
18 foreclosure rate in the U.S. as in epidemic
19 proportions trying to act fast to help the situation.

20 As of 8/19/08 there are 207 entries in
21 the OAC rate case 07-1112-WS-AIR. There were only
22 187 entries in the Ohio American Water last rate
23 increase that was 06-0433-WS-AIR. As of yesterday's
24 date there was 132 correspondence entries and many of

1 the letters were grouped together as one entry.

2 As I look out here -- Huber Ridge

3 residents, the total homes is 1,623 homes, Sunbury

4 Woods is approximately 700 homes, equaling a little

5 over 2,300 homes. As I look out here, and I can't

6 believe the people showed up tonight, the numbers are

7 well over 225 people that's turned out tonight that

8 talked about the letters that was written in there.

9 I think we have an epidemic here.

10 (Applause.)

11 MR. WELCH: By the way, that is drinkable

12 water, it all come from the taps. You can sample the

13 difference. As I said, under the letters is where it

14 came from, each residence, the time, it's all taken

15 from samples today. Be my guest, you've got cups

16 there, if you get thirsty.

17 MR. FLETCHER: You should drink that.

18 The stuff you have in the picture is Ohio American

19 Water.

20 MR. WELCH: If it came from here, it is.

21 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Yeah.

22 MR. WELCH: Thank you.

23 (Applause.)

24 Kim Saunders will be next.

1 DON HIGHT

2 presented himself as a public witness, and being
3 first duly sworn, testified as follows:

4 DIRECT TESTIMONY

5 MR. HIGHT: My name's Don Hight. I live
6 at 8291 Breckenridge Way, that's in Worthington
7 Hills.

8 My question -- first, I want to thank you
9 people for taking the time to be here tonight. My
10 questions are probably rhetorical to a degree, but if
11 I was on the PUCO, I guess there's questions -- this
12 is -- of course the water company's a monopoly, not
13 an oligopoly, it's a monopoly, so apparently we have
14 no control, but if they were going to ask for a rate
15 increase, my question would be: Why?

16 Is it the cost of extraction? The search
17 for new wells? The cost of processing the water?
18 Additional personnel? Compensation for personnel?
19 Return on investment?

20 As I understand, monopolies can only
21 charge so much percentage. Now, I don't know how
22 that's controlled by the state of Ohio or
23 governmental, but there's got to be reasons why you
24 can ask for a 36 percent increase and justify it, and

1 that really bothers me.

2 My average cost in Worthington Hills runs
3 about \$40 a month. Now, as you know, I don't pay a
4 sewage bill, I pay Franklin County, which is another
5 matter.

6 But anyway, to proceed, in reading -- I
7 do not drink the water in Worthington Hills. In
8 reading their report that they put out, their water
9 is close to arsenic level, which scares me to death.
10 They're getting the water out of wells and that -- I
11 don't know how they're doing it or why they're doing
12 it.

13 Now, I also know that if Governor
14 Strickland would come in and want a 36 percent tax
15 increase, or if one of you as employees say "Give me
16 a 36 percent raise," it wouldn't happen.

17 As I pointed out, I don't drink the
18 water. Now, I've been to two of these meetings, one
19 in Galloway, I've been here, been to a couple others,

20 apparently American Water has got a problem all over

21 this whole area and they're screwing everybody it

22 sounds to me like. I don't know what's going on.

23 Another rhetorical question. I would

24 like to, and I don't know how to find this out, there

95

1 must be an ombudsman or somebody with PUCO that can
2 answer these questions, why can't the city of
3 Columbus and all the adjoining communities form a
4 centralized water district and we get all our water
5 from where the city of Columbus is getting it? Why
6 are they getting water out of wells where apparently
7 it isn't even drinkable from what I hear from other
8 people here?

9 That's my comments. I appreciate you
10 taking the time to listen to me, and I'll keep on top
11 of this.

12 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Thank you.

13 (Applause.)

14 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Kallie Wile I believe
15 is next.

16 - - -

17 KIM SAUNDERS

18 presented herself as a public witness, and being
19 first duly sworn, testified as follows:

20 DIRECT TESTIMONY

21 MS. SAUNDERS: Hi. I'm Kim Saunders

22 S-a-u-n-d-e-r-s. I live at 5925 Dakar, been there

23 for 15 years, and I too was shocked when I moved

24 here; three times the amount of Columbus. That's

1 something a realtor does not tell you. He never
2 tells you how much that's going to be.

3 As far as watering our lawns and our
4 flowers, that might not seem like an important thing
5 to some people, but if our lawns are going to die,
6 let's decrease our property value. The lawns are
7 definitely dying. They're not just dormant. They're
8 crunchy.

9 So I've got a couple of pictures here,
10 and one lady did say that she had the black ring
11 around her toilet after coming back after two weeks,
12 before that comes it's the iron. This is my shower
13 curtain; can't get that orange off.

14 This is just a shelf in my shower where
15 two bottles, my dog shampoos, sat for just one week.
16 I know you can't all see this; there is an orange
17 ring from both bottles just from one week. I'm not
18 drinking that water.

19 So my bill, one month, for three people

20 is a hundred bucks. It's ridiculous. I don't drink
21 the water, and I drink a lot of water. So I have
22 hardly watered my plants. I haven't watered my
23 grass; there's my neighbor, he can attest to that.
24 It's just terrible.

1 So I'd like to --

2 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Yes, please.

3 MS. SAUNDERS: -- give you these
4 pictures, and thank you very much.

5 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Leah Beaumont is next.

6 - - -

7 KALLIE WILE

8 presented herself as a public witness, and being
9 first duly sworn, testified as follows:

10 DIRECT TESTIMONY

11 MS. WILE: My name is Kallie Wile,
12 K-a-l-l-i-e W-i-l-e. I live at 4511 Yellowhammer
13 Drive in Sunbury Woods.

14 The main thing I wanted to bring up is
15 that just this year, actually I think it was just
16 this year they were just granted -- started to
17 collect the last rate increase which I believe was
18 around 18 percent, and so I -- I couldn't believe
19 that we're already getting another one and they had

20 just started collecting the 18 percent that they had

21 just been given.

22 It's real discouraging when you -- I work

23 for the city of Dublin and my raises are limited to

24 3 percent, and so I know that's been a big point.

98

1 But my questions are when you look at
2 their request, do they have to say what cuts they
3 have made in order to meet their budget or do they
4 just say, you know, "This is how we've spent the
5 money," or are they accountable to say "Well, we've
6 cut here, we've cut there," ways that they have tried
7 to save, you know, so that we don't have such a big
8 burden? I guess that's what I want to know on that.

9 Also, I don't know if you can require
10 them to be audited like some kind of independent
11 audit where they can come in and say "Well, these are
12 all the areas you're being inefficient" and, you
13 know, make corrections that way. So those would just
14 be my suggestions. Thank you.

15 (Applause.)

16 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Thank you.

17 Greg Gossman will be next.

18 - - -

19 LEAH BEAUMONT

20 presented herself as a public witness, and being

21 first duly sworn, testified as follows:

22 DIRECT TESTIMONY

23 MS. BEAUMONT: My name is Leah Beaumont,

24 and I live at 3330 Vickers Drive in Blendon Township.

1 I've lived in my home for nine years.

2 Buying that house was a dream come true for my
3 family, and this is just one of the things that chips
4 away from a homeowner's dream.

5 I have neighbors that are moving out.

6 Most recently my neighbor to the left of me, they
7 literally I think left in the middle of the night,
8 and they were having garage sales, and they just
9 couldn't make ends meet. I personally have seen my
10 bill nearly quadruple in nine years that I've owned
11 my home.

12 I don't know about anybody else, but I
13 can tell you the day that the housing market changes,
14 we're listing our house to sell. There's just no way
15 that we can continue to make cuts on our end. We've
16 cut activities for our children. I've changed my
17 medications.

18 I do have a health condition. I've
19 changed my medications to make sure everything that I

20 take is on a \$4 list at somebody's store, Giant Eagle
21 or wherever I can get it. We've done everything that
22 we can. We don't water our grass. I feel bad
23 because I have a neighbor who's selling their house
24 and I can't keep my curb appeal up to snuff for them.

100

1 We do not drink the water in our home.

2 We do buy bottled water because of the
3 quality of our water. My youngest son has eczema. I
4 do everything I can for his skin. I was using Dreft,
5 but I realized it wasn't the detergent, it was the
6 water that was irritating him.

7 You know, they're asking for an increase
8 of 36 percent. I can tell you that if Kroger started
9 asking for a 36 percent increase on everything that
10 they had, we would all seek other options.

11 Unfortunately, we don't have that option right now.

12 And the only thing that I would look for
13 is to see an improvement prior to the increase.
14 Something that I can say, you know what, I'm going to
15 get some bang for my buck. But as my bill has
16 increased, the quality of my water has decreased.

17 I have stains in my toilet. My towels,
18 I'm embarrassed to have my mother-in-law come to my
19 home and offer her a towel. You know, I buy

20 brand-new towels when she's coming because I'm

21 embarrassed about that type of thing.

22 And we have just done everything that we

23 can and it is -- we are getting less and less and

24 less for more and more, and I don't know if the PUCO

101

1 is just going to look at things like iron and
2 partially look at the facts or if they are an
3 advocate for us, but most of these people, they're
4 not making up what they're telling you. These are
5 honest, hardworking people, and I bust my butt
6 everyday.

7 I live in this community. My kids go to
8 school in this community. I have an office mate that
9 is a real estate agent, and unlike what the other
10 agent said, she is an ethical real estate agent
11 because I sat in my office the other day and listened
12 to her, and she doesn't know where I live, but I sat
13 in my office to listen to her discourage a client
14 from a house in Huber Ridge because of the water and
15 because of the proposed increase, and I thought I
16 sure as hope -- I almost said something else, but we
17 are in the house of the Lord.

18 I sure as heck hope that that's not the
19 house across the street from me that's going to sit

20 empty for I don't know how long because real estate

21 agents that are ethical like this person are saying

22 "Don't go here. Don't go to Huber Ridge, their water

23 is going up." You know, they're saying these things.

24 Soon we're going to have to choose

1 between this and a school levy for our children. I
2 mean, where does it end is my question. Someone has
3 to look at where it ends. If they're going to ask
4 for an increase, then I would just ask that they show
5 good faith in improving the quality of our water and
6 then maybe look at an increase down the line, but I
7 don't think it's warranted now. We've had more
8 increases than we can already afford.

9 Like I said, you know, when you change
10 your medication to pay your utilities, you need water
11 and I need my medication, and to have to choose --
12 fortunately, I can choose cheaper medication. I
13 can't choose cheaper water. And I can't go less than
14 the \$4 route.

15 So I plead with you, if there's anything
16 that you can do on behalf of the consumers, like I
17 said, we're hardworking, honest people, we're not
18 trying to get something for nothing, we're just
19 trying to survive. Thank you.

20 (Applause.)

21 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Thank you.

22 Phil Bolton, or Bouton.

23 - - -

24

103

1 GREG GOSSMAN

2 presented himself as a public witness, and being
3 first duly sworn, testified as follows:

4 DIRECT TESTIMONY

5 MR. GOSSMAN: My name is Greg Gossman,
6 G-o-s-s-m-a-n. I live at 3795 Caracas Drive
7 sometimes called "the court" back there.

8 I guess I would love to stand up here and
9 say it's just way too much, because it is, but
10 everything is. The fact of the matter is we are a
11 household of eight. We average \$220 a month in
12 water. With a 36 percent increase we're going to be
13 looking at almost \$300 a month.

14 When I got out of high school, my Lord, I
15 never dreamed I'd spend that much a month for an
16 automobile. But that's not the point.

17 I would love to blame Ohio American
18 Water. Quite frankly, I think they're unethical and
19 immoral. There's a number of occurrences that I've

20 had in the five years that I've been in the Ridge,
21 one of the things that I've noticed is when I look at
22 the bar graph of my yearly usage from month to month,
23 we always spike June, July, August, and I found that
24 particularly interesting because, quite frankly, my

1 children, a lot of them are gone during the summer

2 staying over at friends' homes.

3 We don't water the lawn. My wife and I

4 are gone a lot. We have a garden over in New Albany.

5 Quite frankly, we don't, you know, you don't have the

6 extracurricular activities you have during the school

7 year so you're not doing nearly as much laundry.

8 The kids aren't taking nearly as many

9 showers. You don't have school clothes, play

10 clothes, gym clothes to wash every day. And by the

11 way, we average three to four loads of laundry a day

12 during the school year, okay? I would say that

13 noticeably we use less water during the summer, and

14 yet every year, June, July, August, our water usage

15 is higher.

16 I have some background in industrial, and

17 I've always been tempted to go out and buy a

18 flowmeter and put an accurate flowmeter on that

19 system to see how much water are we really using.

20 Another thing that I say that I feel is
21 sort of immoral, I am one of those lucky folks that,
22 quite frankly, was more than three days late on my
23 water bill and got it turned off. One of the really
24 pleasant parts of that, and I don't know if any of

105

1 you have had this experience, is taking that little
2 trip down by Eastland. Anybody here had to do that?
3 Not pay it by credit card, but actually
4 take cash to the New World Market out at the corner
5 of Refugee and Hamilton Roads where I'm not really
6 certain anyone there speaks English, but it's at
7 least a 25-minute drive from Huber Ridge down there
8 and back.

9 And then at a time when, obviously,
10 because you got your water shut off because you
11 didn't have the money, you get to pay an extra 40
12 bucks for the privilege of having that guy, living on
13 Caracas Court it's less than 30 seconds from the
14 water plant to my house, and I get to pay \$40 for the
15 privilege of having him drive up there, turn that key
16 down in that street box and turn the water back on.

17 Those are things that I think are
18 unethical, immoral. I think there are things going
19 on there, and if those are the things that we're

20 seeing directly as the consumer, I don't even want to

21 think about what's going on in the books in that

22 company.

23 (Applause.)

24 MR. GOSSMAN: That's why I'm saying it's

106

1 too much. It's too much. It's a monopoly, it's not
2 a competitive market, and that's why I'm saying,
3 okay, I can't blame Ohio American Utilities -- Ohio
4 American Water. They're doing exactly what a
5 for-profit is supposed to do; they're making as much
6 money off of us as they can. Okay. So even
7 though --

8 That's why I ask the PUCO, our water
9 rates are multiples of surrounding communities. You
10 look at the per CCF unit pricing and you say, "Well,
11 it's about half of Westerville." You know, it's
12 about, or you know, Westerville is about half of
13 ours, Columbus is about 60 percent of ours, but the
14 fact of the matter is when I look at the true usage,
15 and I moved here from Westerville five years ago,
16 same family, same kids, same habits, when we moved
17 from Westerville, our water bill was between 130 and
18 135 dollars per three months. We moved in here, got
19 our first water bill, and it was 120.

20 Now, since Westerville is every three
21 months, Ohio American is every month, that looks to
22 me like about 3X, not 2, and so I've got to ask the
23 question: Where is that disparity coming from? Is
24 it in service charges? Fees? Or is it in inaccurate

1 metering?

2 Another thing that I do know is I walk
3 quite a bit in the neighborhood and something that
4 I've noticed, even after three or four weeks of
5 almost drought conditions, and I do weird things, I'm
6 a strange guy, I've got a background in construction
7 and design and so forth, walked past a storm sewer
8 and you don't see any water coming from sump pumps
9 down through the curb, obviously no storm water, and
10 yet you hear water running in the storm sewers.
11 Where is that coming from? Couldn't be a leak in the
12 water system, could it? I'd sure like to know.

13 But at any rate, like I say, I want to
14 blame Ohio American Water; I can't. It's not their
15 fault. They're doing what they're supposed to be
16 doing. It's our responsibility, it's the Blendon
17 Township trustees and it's the Public Utilities
18 Commission, it is our responsibility to hold them
19 accountable. And as the PUCO and the other

20 government agencies if you want to say, Blendon

21 Township, give us some options. It's a monopoly.

22 They're asking for ridiculous amounts of money, and

23 we don't have a choice.

24 (Applause.)

108

1 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Thank you.

2 Ralph Murphy will be next.

3 - - -

4 PHILLIP BOUTON

5 presented himself as a public witness, and being

6 first duly sworn, testified as follows:

7 DIRECT TESTIMONY

8 MR. BOUTON: Hi. My name is Phillip

9 Bouton, that's B- -- as in boy -- -o-u-t-o-n. I live

10 at 3472 Cherokee Rose Drive in Sunbury Woods. I'm

11 also the Sunbury Woods Civic Association President.

12 I've been here for six-and-a-half years,

13 and I guess lucky for my neighbors I didn't know

14 about the water when I moved in, so my realtor didn't

15 tell me. And my house had been vacant for a while,

16 so if I asked for, you know, a past history, it

17 probably would have been not accurate anyway. We

18 also have a lot of foreclosures in our neighborhood

19 so a similar thing will happen there.

20 But the water rate increase and the high
21 cost of water has certainly impacted the quality of
22 my life, the quality of my kids' life. My kids don't
23 splay in the sprinkler. We don't water our lawn.
24 You know, we keep flowers, now I look for flowers

109

1 that are drought tolerant so I can't buy -- I don't

2 buy impatiens or anything like that where the

3 flowering is going to look real nice.

4 And then we've had several incidents over

5 the years with, you know, our good towels being rust

6 stained. We complained a couple of times. One time

7 somebody from the water company came over and dropped

8 off some vials that were supposed to take out rust

9 stains; so we gave up on that. As do I think a lot

10 of people.

11 You know, we hear there aren't

12 complaints. Well, that's because people have given

13 up. They're not complaining anymore, you know.

14 There's nothing they feel they can do.

15 So anyway, I think the consumers should

16 be entitled to quality water without the burden of

17 expensive past corporate mistakes. Merely bringing

18 the infrastructure to an acceptable and modern level

19 should be part of long-term planning and a corporate

20 investment system, not a burden on the consumer, not

21 due to shortsightedness on the part of management.

22 You know, they need to bear some of the costs as

23 we've been hearing before.

24 If OAW justified a rate increase last

110

1 year, how can they realistically justify another and
2 larger increase this year? You know, 36 percent just
3 kind of blows my mind.

4 And somebody mentioned earlier about
5 cooking the books. You know, they have people who
6 work probably well over 40 hours a week and who are
7 paid to come up with the language and justify what's
8 in their proposal for this rate increase. You know,
9 we don't have the technical expertise. Luckily, we
10 have people like Jim Welch, though, to fight this.

11 (Applause.)

12 MR. WELCH: Thank you.

13 MR. BOUTON: You know, I mean, if you
14 look at -- I'm in public health. If you look at a
15 lot of studies that are done, you know, by whomever,
16 you know, on behalf of a business, usually it's
17 biased, and we all know that. It's easy to twist
18 figures and facts and make things sound good.

19 So I hope PUCO keeps that in mind. I

20 know you're all very intelligent. I know the water

21 issue's been very challenging for you, but it's very

22 challenging to our pocketbook.

23 Let's see, another big challenge has been

24 the fact that, you know, we just fought a water

111

1 increase last year. We don't have the resources to
2 keep doing this. This is a message to PUCO, this is
3 a message to Governor Strickland and our legislators,
4 you know, we just can't keep fighting it every year.

5 They can come back every year and there's
6 nothing to stop them right now. You know, I think
7 something more reasonable would be coming back maybe
8 every five years. With good long-term planning
9 there's really no reason why that shouldn't be
10 acceptable.

11 And so these frequent water increases or
12 requests are a burden on us, it's a burden on the
13 government, on our tax-paying money, so there
14 definitely should be a restriction on that.

15 You know, we've had -- let's see. Oh,
16 yeah, odor/taste of the water is a big complaint.
17 It's a complaint that I have. You know, certainly
18 our water quality has gotten a little better, you
19 know, since the last rate increase, but you guys had

20 a lot of stipulations on them, you know, to meet
21 that. I don't think they've had the long-term track
22 record as yet to justify another rate increase.
23 You know a lot of people still have
24 filters. My neighbor gave me a filter, a whole-house

112

1 filter, I forgot to bring it, it was in for six weeks
2 and it's brown; completely brown. So I hope maybe I
3 can bring that to somebody and enter that into
4 evidence still; I'd like to know that.

5 We have a lot of problems with customer
6 service. I've had issues with customer service.
7 It's hard to get answers and, you know, this is
8 having a bad impact on my neighborhood. We can't
9 water our lawns, we can't have good looking
10 flowerbeds, you know, flowers that are blooming all
11 year round. It's expensive.

12 My brother lives in Westerville. I'm
13 paying over two times as much, you know, that he's
14 paying, and he has four kids and I have two.

15 I don't want to take up too much time
16 here. I appreciate the Ohio Consumers' Counsel, you
17 know, we need more people like you helping us out,
18 and just to get back to the 30 percent --
19 unfathomable 36 percent increase, you know, I just

20 can't afford that. It's too much of my pocketbook,

21 and I can barely pay my bills as it is every month.

22 Thanks.

23 (Applause.)

24 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Thank you.

113

1 Amy and Kevin Brewer will be next.

2 - - -

3 RALPH MURPHY

4 presented himself as a public witness, and being

5 first duly sworn, testified as follows:

6 DIRECT TESTIMONY

7 MR. MURPHY: My name is Ralph Murphy. I

8 live at 5725 Vienna Drive, been here about 25 years,

9 and I do remember what the water was like prior to

10 the reverse osmosis treatment plant.

11 So like some of the people have mentioned

12 that when that did go in, not immediately afterwards,

13 but after months of flushing and getting some of the

14 sediment and everything out of the system the water

15 quality did improve, but as somebody else mentioned,

16 I don't think that reverse osmosis treatment plant is

17 doing its job right now because I've noticed that

18 the -- and my wife more specifically has noticed when

19 she does the dishes, because I can't do the dishes,

20 it's against my nature. She's not here, so I can say

21 that. Please don't respond.

22 But anyway, the bottom line is that she

23 refuses to make iced tea or lemonade or anything like

24 that and have people drink it because she's afraid

114

1 that the taste is just not there like you would if
2 you got bottled water, and actually she does use
3 bottled water to make iced tea and lemonade because
4 she will not use the water from the tap.

5 Someone mentioned about the service. I
6 do remember about a year ago I kept getting letters
7 from the water company asking to come in and read the
8 inside meter, and it was going on for months, and I
9 would keep calling every month and say "We don't have
10 an inside meter. We have an outside meter and a
11 well."

12 And so okay, another month or so would go
13 by, we get another letter saying "If we don't get in
14 to read your meter, we're going to have to shut you
15 off" and everything. This went on for like three or
16 four months. I finally said, "Okay, good. Come on
17 in and shut the water off, because if you can find
18 it, more power to you," but just another example of
19 poor quality service.

20 One of the things that I was concerned
21 about too is when Jim Welch brought this up, the
22 Citizen's Utilities, in the 14 years that they were
23 running the -- had the water company, three rate
24 increases in 14 years, that to me sounds logical and

115

1 somewhat acceptable. I mean, anybody hates to pay
2 more for basic utilities, but, you know, three rate
3 increases in 14 years? That sounds somewhat doable.
4 But three in six years? That's just -- or five?

5 MR. WELCH: Five years.

6 MR. MURPHY: Okay, five years, that's
7 even worse. I work for the federal government and
8 some of the programs they have is a German -- it's
9 SAP, it's a German company, and one of the ladies was
10 talking about where she overpays her bills and she
11 can't figure out why she's getting charged late fees.
12 Well, if SAP is one of the programs that Ohio
13 American Water uses, then I can --

14 MR. FLETCHER: It's a known flaw in their
15 program.

16 MR. MURPHY: Absolutely. Absolutely.

17 MR. FLETCHER: I work with SAP, so I
18 know.

19 MR. MURPHY: Okay. The thing that kind

20 of discourages me and some of the people have talked
21 about where they lived in Columbus and they've lived
22 in Westerville, and it really concerns me the fact
23 that we have to meet every two or three years before
24 the PUCO to fight these rate increases. It doesn't

1 seem like there's a commitment from a company that's
2 going to stay in business long enough to back up any
3 commitment that they make to the consumers.

4 You know, if they promise us we're going
5 to have better water and everything like that, okay,
6 that's a promise now. Six months or a year from now
7 when that company is sold, there goes the promises.

8 There's no commitment to continue the quality of
9 service that the company or the residents expect.

10 Again, we lived here about 25 years and
11 people ask me "Why don't you live in Westerville?" I
12 mean, because we live in Blendon Township and
13 everything else. And I'm beginning to wonder why
14 we're not. If we're going to -- if the PUCO is going
15 to recommend this rate increase, the water bill's
16 going to go up, in addition with our, you know, taxes
17 and everything else that goes up. We're sending
18 money overseas, and I don't know what it would take
19 to --

20 Once a year we get on Westerville water
21 when they have to do some kind of maintenance or
22 something like that, and I don't understand why we
23 just can't bite the bullet and say "Okay, we're going
24 to pay Westerville taxes, let's see if Westerville

117

1 would be willing to annex us into their city."

2 (Applause.)

3 MR. MURPHY: Our kids go to school in

4 Westerville schools. You know, it just feels like,

5 you know, that we're not -- we're paying for

6 something that we're not getting. I hate the idea

7 about -- I don't know why I hate the idea about being

8 in Westerville, but just something inside me says,

9 you know, and I might get smacked by somebody as I

10 leave here tonight, but I just think that there's got

11 to be something done.

12 And I think one of the trustees or

13 somebody mentioned that that can't be done because

14 there's some type of government setup that where you

15 annex a certain township or community you have to go

16 with Columbus water and sewer or something like that.

17 But, you know, these are elected officials and they

18 work for us, so the Public Utilities Commission is

19 supposed to represent the public and hopefully

20 represent us here.

21 I just feel like we need to put a stop to

22 it, and if it's a matter of being annexed into

23 Westerville so we don't have to do this every two

24 years, we've got better things to do with our

118

1 resources than to fight this every two years or three
2 years or whatever it is. I'd love to spend this much
3 energy and see this many people be involved in our
4 schools.

5 Some school meetings I guess in
6 Westerville are very sparsely attended. So I'd hate
7 to think what the school board would be like if they
8 had this many people every month or so concerned
9 about the students.

10 And I just think that we need to get some
11 more positive feedback to the PUCO. The quality of
12 water is horrible. And we do use bottled water; I
13 just wish we would not have to do that. Thank you.

14 (Applause.)

15 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Thank you.

16 Bill Riggs is on deck.

17 MR. FLETCHER: It's like they're using
18 our communities as a cash cow to milk as much as they
19 can as fast as they can to pay all this.

20 EXAMINER BULGRIN: I have to get you up

21 here on the stand so the court reporter can get that

22 on the record.

23 MR. FLETCHER: I will gladly come back

24 up.

119

1 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Amy and Kevin Brewer.

2 No.

3 How about Bill Riggs?

4 - - -

5 BILL RIGGS

6 presented himself as a public witness, and being

7 first duly sworn, testified as follows:

8 DIRECT TESTIMONY

9 MR. RIGGS: William Riggs, Jr., 5520

10 Copenhagen Drive, and I want to first apologize, I've

11 gotten so excited when I've listened to these

12 messages tonight that I've puffed up like this.

13 I want to thank you, PUCO, for coming out

14 here tonight. Obviously, the Faith Covenant Church,

15 first church I've ever been in where I didn't really

16 sweat; I appreciate the air.

17 The leadership at our Huber Ridge Area

18 Association, obviously they're responsible for

19 this -- Somebody's popular -- for this kind of

20 turnout. When I walked in tonight, there wasn't a
21 parking spot, and I thank God for my wife who let me
22 get out and come on in and she worried about it.
23 Everything that could be said has been
24 said here tonight. I worked for a man for 30 years

120

1 who used to say "These are indisputable facts." And

2 I'd like to just go over two or three of those

3 indisputable facts.

4 Our water quality, we've had a few folks

5 say it's okay, we've had the majority say it's very

6 poor. That should be, PUCO, an indisputable fact

7 when you get this many people saying no.

8 The customer service. If you've ever had

9 to use it, you know it's nonexistent. That's an

10 indisputable fact.

11 (Applause.)

12 MR. RIGGS: I listened to the man who

13 talked about going down with cash money to an

14 undesirable area of town to pay a bill so that he

15 could get his water turned back on after only three

16 days. I can honestly tell you that didn't happen to

17 me, because I refused to do anything -- pay the

18 \$40 because they cut us off because my wife paid them

19 over the phone, and their story was it takes two or

20 three days for that money to get collected.

21 If they would have told us that, we could

22 have paid it and never had a problem and, you know,

23 we were without for one day, checked into a hotel,

24 the next day they put it back on without the 40

1 bucks.

2 But billing questions? It's their way or
3 the highway, and that's an indisputable fact. I have
4 a family of two, even though I do puff up, my wife's
5 a little bitty woman, we've been here 31 years. As
6 my uncle would say: We've seen it worser.

7 But we have the bricks in the toilet. We
8 do the tooth brushing, the on/off, on/off, you know,
9 there's no way we could spend our water -- we just
10 don't do it. My wife will hate me to say this, but
11 we have the obvious in my bathroom: If it's yellow,
12 let it mellow. If it's brown, it must go down. But
13 I try not to do that but once a day.

14 (Applause.)

15 MR. RIGGS: My final indisputable fact,
16 and then I'm going to close with something that I
17 think is appropriate, is the price for our product,
18 and I'm saying it's an indisputable fact, is
19 ridiculous.

20 PUCO, I hope you've listened tonight. I
21 believe you're good people. I have to trust you; I
22 don't know you well enough not to. But I want to
23 hope that you've heard tonight that this is a health
24 issue, we are sick and tired and we don't want to

1 take it anymore.

2 (Applause.)

3 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Thank you.

4 Linda Goldstein and then -- is it Tefft?

5 - - -

6 LINDA GOLDSTEIN

7 presented herself as a public witness, and being

8 first duly sworn, testified as follows:

9 DIRECT TESTIMONY

10 MS. GOLDSTEIN: Hi. I'm Linda Goldstein,

11 and I live at 3621 Panama Drive.

12 I came here tonight to show my support

13 and, like all of you, I'm just outraged at the

14 increase that they're proposing. They asked me "Do

15 you want to speak?" and I said "No." And I listened

16 to all these people and nobody was saying what I have

17 to say until -- and I went up there and signed my

18 name and don't you know two people brought up what I

19 was going to talk about, and it's that little white

20 truck.

21 The little white truck came while I was

22 at work. I am a widow. I'm on a fixed income, but I

23 do have a part-time job. I was working, and I came

24 home and I went to make my coffee, and guess what, no

123

1 water. I called the water company and -- because I
2 had no shutoff notice. And I called the water
3 company -- now this was in June. I had paid \$116.
4 Mind you, I live alone. I have no dogs. I do drink
5 the water, but I don't drink that much.

6 Secondly, well, when I called them, I
7 said, "You know, I didn't get a shutoff notice. I
8 have just paid you 116" -- no, it was \$110 on the
9 16th of June. And they said, "Yes, but you still
10 owed \$43 and you didn't pay it." So they shut me off
11 for \$43. And I said "\$43? I don't get paid until
12 next week." \$43 was not -- it was out of the
13 question.

14 And she said, "Well, lady, I'm just going
15 to make your life a whole lot worse. It's 41.65 to
16 turn it back on." Well, I didn't know what to do,
17 and this had happened to me, not this particular
18 thing, but something else had happened to me, oh,
19 about a year ago, and where I had said "God, where do

20 I turn here because there's just not enough money?"

21 And as I was driving down Cleveland

22 Avenue I saw this sign that said "Need help? Call

23 211." Well, guess what. That number stuck in my

24 head. So I called 211, and they did send me downtown

124

1 to Catholic Services and they paid my \$43.

2 But guess what, they don't pay the 41.65,

3 and so I'm still in the hole. I didn't have the -- I

4 didn't have the money to pay the 43, and now I've got

5 41.65 and I don't have the money for that.

6 Well, I did call my daughter which was in

7 Oklahoma and said, "Hey, do you have any money in the

8 bank?" And she said "Yes." I said, "Could you

9 please call in my -- so I could be turned back on."

10 But this is the type of service, customer

11 service, that I got. Now, I did lodge a complaint

12 with PUCO and they told me, they said, "We've had

13 many." My name's Linda Goldstein, so they said they

14 would make a recording of that. But I said, "This is

15 ridiculous." I mean, for 43 bucks, people, they

16 turned me off and charged me twice as much to, you

17 know, for the whole thing.

18 But anyway, there was something else they

19 did to me. Oh, when I was down at Catholic Services

20 downtown the lady called and she made the pledge that
21 she would pay the \$43, and they said, "Well, she's
22 got" -- and she tried to talk to them and said "Can't
23 you just put it onto the bill?" "Oh, no, it is the
24 state of Ohio." Now, I don't know if that's true,

125

1 but I wish you would look into that. "The state of
2 Ohio will not let us turn you back on without a 41.65
3 charge."

4 FROM THE FLOOR: Not true.

5 MS. GOLDSTEIN: From there -- but this
6 lady was very nice. She was very nice that I talked
7 to down there, and it was a customer service from
8 American Water.

9 But she did tell me, she said, "You've
10 only got 45 minutes, honey, and then it's going
11 to" -- because this was a Friday afternoon, "you've
12 got 45 minutes and then it's going to cost you \$80 to
13 turn the water back on because it's after 3 o'clock
14 and that's after hours."

15 So that's when I went and called my
16 daughter, and thank God she had 41.65 in her bank
17 account. So she called it in and they did come out
18 that same day and they did turn it on. But just two
19 days ago I got my bill and it's for \$226. No,

20 actually it's for \$222, I think, but if I don't pay

21 it by September 7th, it's 226.

22 Where -- I mean, I looked at it. I can't

23 see it. I can't see it. I paid the 116, I paid the

24 43, and they said but I still had an overdue balance

126

1 of 79. Well, I can't -- I still don't -- I don't see

2 where it comes from.

3 From the 79, which they're saying that's

4 a previous balance, it goes on down with all these

5 charges, they still don't add up to \$226. I don't

6 know what to do.

7 I mean, I work. I just turned Medicare

8 age -- Yes! -- last month and I'm glad to get

9 Medicare, I'm glad to get Social Security, but I just

10 don't have enough to make it, you know. So anyway,

11 that's my story, and I just think that they're a

12 lousy company.

13 MR. WELCH: Amen.

14 MS. GOLDSTEIN: And I don't know what we

15 can do to stop them, but I certainly hope this

16 tonight has, you know, has helped. If not, we'll see

17 you all in Columbus because I'm out of there, and I

18 hate that because I've lived here for 30 years. So

19 thank you. Or 20 years, not 30.

20 (Applause.)

21 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Thomas Tefft.

22 And if we could have Lynn George and

23 Kathleen Durkin next up.

24 - - -

127

1 THOMAS TEFFT

2 presented himself as a public witness, and being
3 first duly sworn, testified as follows:

4 DIRECT TESTIMONY

5 MR. TEFFT: Hi. My name's Thomas Tefft,
6 T-e-f-f-t. I live at 5683 Bashaw Drive in Huber
7 Ridge.

8 I've heard a lot of this that's been said
9 tonight and it's, obviously, all true and we all
10 understand that. I haven't heard too much about the
11 sewer. We've heard a lot about the water. We've all
12 had bad water. We've lived with bad water, I've
13 dealt with this issue for a number of years.

14 I was president of the Civic Association
15 for about seven years. I personally have a reverse
16 osmosis system which I installed in my house after I
17 took out my water conditioner after they put reverse
18 osmosis in, that's what we use to feed the animals or
19 give drinks to the animals, the birds, the cats, and

20 the dogs in the house, the rabbit.

21 I drink the reverse osmosis and we make

22 our ice with reverse osmosis, and we have a water tap

23 that we use for coffee and tea that's reverse osmosis

24 water.

1 Other than that, we use bottled water for
2 when we go anywhere. Water quality has improved or
3 did improve after the reverse osmosis went in, and we
4 did agree to pay for that. It has degraded again
5 since the current owner took over the company.

6 I've had an issue several times with my
7 sewage, though. And I, like everybody else, have
8 paid for the sewer maintenance and for the water
9 maintenance, and if you've dealt with either one of
10 those issues, the first thing you got to understand
11 is if your sewer backs up, it ain't an emergency.
12 They got 24 hours before they even bother coming out.
13 Then when they do, you got to fork over your 50 bucks
14 up front. Then they go into the issue of cleaning
15 your sewer.

16 I did that. Couple months later that
17 sewer insurance charge dropped off my bill because
18 they canceled me because I used the service. Well,
19 it's been a couple years ago. Every time I have a

20 sewer problem, they would come out and they'd go to

21 the sewer at the end of the street.

22 I live on a little short street, it's got

23 21 houses on it, it's a little dead-end street, it's

24 a cul-de-sac on my end, dead-end at the park on the

1 other end, you can get to it off Mexico.

2 They go to the end of the cul-de-sac near
3 me, three houses from me, and they open the sewer
4 head there, they look down and they say, "Well,
5 nothing's standing there, it's got to be okay." Then
6 they go down to the other end of the street by Mexico
7 and they open the sewer there and they say "Yeah,
8 working here."

9 They'd always tell us "There's two other
10 sewers here, two other sewer heads, but we can't find
11 them. We don't know where they are." They always
12 told me they thought the one was in my side yard
13 between my driveway and my neighbor's driveway, so
14 every time there's a sewer problem they would come
15 and they'd look and they'd try to find that sewer,
16 and they'd bring out all kinds of test equipment and
17 metering equipment and metal detectors. Finally
18 said, "Well, maybe it's under your neighbor's tree."

19 Well, my neighbor cut down that tree. We

20 had a sewer problem. They came out and looked for
21 the sewer. They said, "Well, the tree's down," so
22 they checked up there where the tree was and sure
23 enough they got a metal reading, and they dug down
24 and guess what, it wasn't the sewer head.

130

1 Well, then they found out that they
2 needed to go back and track that because I wasn't
3 satisfied with what they did. They came out, they
4 said -- I had called them and said my sewer was
5 backed up and there were two other people on the
6 street in a week that had a sewer backup, one was
7 directly across the street from me, the other one was
8 a couple doors down across the street.

9 It just didn't seem right on a little
10 street with 21 houses that in a week's time three
11 people would have a sewer problem and the sewer was
12 okay.

13 So they hurried right out and they
14 brought a big power flushing truck with a big tank of
15 water on it, and they went down to that sewer head
16 three doors past my house and they pumped, they said,
17 500 gallons of water through the sewer and it ran
18 through just fine. Guess what. My sewer was still
19 backed up.

20 So I called Roto-Rooter out. It wasn't
21 Roto-Rooter, but it was a sewer company; I used them
22 the last time that it had backed up after they
23 canceled my insurance. And that time he come out and
24 he cleared it. He went out 50 feet and he found a

131

1 plug and he cleaned it out.

2 This time I had already gone out about
3 25 feet, that was as much as I could go out and I
4 hadn't found anything so I called him, he came back
5 again. Well, he went out about 30 feet and he found
6 a plug and he cleared it, obviously, because
7 everything was okay then.

8 And from the first time he came out
9 through this time we've been putting stuff in the
10 drains regularly as he had suggested. Because I do
11 have a tree in my front yard, he said maybe that's
12 it, although he didn't have evidence of it.

13 Well, the water company got real busy and
14 they came and they tracked down those two missing
15 sewer heads, and I of course have a letter, as do you
16 folks at PUCO.

17 And we also talked about the water
18 quality issue, and we mentioned a gentleman from the
19 water company who had come to our house and looked at

20 our new kitchen we had remodeled at the time of the

21 last rate increase and showed him the buildup on

22 things including in the double drawer \$1,500

23 dishwasher I had installed.

24 And so in your letter his name was

132

1 mentioned and several other issues and, as I said,
2 they came, they found those sewers. The one sewer
3 head was underneath my driveway. The other one they
4 found under a pussy willow bush several doors down on
5 my side of the street. So they had to dig up my
6 driveway and raise the sewer head.

7 I got a letter from the water company,
8 because they of course saw my letter to you, and all
9 of a sudden they turned things around.

10 Years ago I learned as a young
11 individual, and I'm retired now from the state of
12 Ohio, pardon the French, but you don't get in a
13 pissing match with a skunk.

14 The water company sent a letter that
15 said, number one, that gentleman had never come to my
16 house. Even though I had his card, it obviously was
17 somebody else using his name and his card because
18 they said he didn't work for them.

19 The other thing they said, said the

20 reason they couldn't find the sewer is it was under
21 my driveway. Well, my house was built in 1973. I
22 moved in in the '70s. I've lived there close to 30
23 years, and there has never been a sewer head in my
24 driveway. There's always been just a driveway.

133

1 And the water company has never been able
2 to find their sewer no matter which water company
3 owned the company. And they never were able to find
4 the one down the street under the pussy willow bush
5 that's been there for years and years and years and
6 years.

7 I just find it interesting the water
8 company buys something during the last rate case,
9 they admitted that they didn't know their system,
10 they didn't know all the intricacies of this system,
11 they didn't have a map of their system.

12 I think it's interesting that through the
13 years we have been asked to pay up front for all the
14 improvements and then once they got the
15 infrastructure, and we paid for it, that was allowed
16 to be added to their investment to improve their rate
17 base, but they don't even know what they have, nor
18 can they find it.

19 I also find it interesting to know that

20 through the years as we paid reasonable water rates,
21 they have reasonable amounts of equipment, and if
22 they needed a piece of equipment, they would go rent
23 a piece of equipment. But now we probably have one
24 of the finest equipped water companies in central

1 Ohio.

2 It's nice to have tools. It's nice to
3 have white trucks to go around and do shutoffs, but
4 how many white trucks do you need? How many new
5 tractors and how many big power flushing pieces of
6 equipment and so forth and so on do you need,
7 particularly when you close down the local office of
8 the water company that's been here for all the years
9 I've lived in the Westerville area, which is about 35
10 years. We no longer can go down and pay our water
11 bill in person locally; we got to pay it through the
12 mail.

13 Well, several years ago after about three
14 times I got charged late charges because even though
15 my check cleared when I mailed it in, they said they
16 didn't get it before the due date, then I started
17 paying 65 cents to pay it at the Sunoco station.
18 Well, it got so it really wasn't worthwhile for the
19 Sunoco station and they dropped that. Didn't figure

20 it was worth the 65 cents.

21 So I started getting to pay the privilege

22 of a dollar 50 or more to pay it on line, because

23 they don't have a local office where you can pay, and

24 if you send it through the mail, they never seem to

135

1 get it in time to avoid a late charge.

2 I found it interesting. I'm willing to

3 pay the additional charge to do it just because I

4 don't want to pay the late charge, but I think that

5 they should provide a local service where we can pay

6 our bills without an additional charge.

7 I found it interesting that when I got a

8 notice from the water company, that if I needed to

9 review their rate request, that was no problem, all I

10 had to do was stop into their office in Marion, Ohio,

11 available anytime during their normal working hours.

12 So I guess all I'm saying is we're paying

13 a big service charge, we've got lousy water, we're

14 back to where we either have water conditioners or we

15 put in water filters or we put in reverse osmosis

16 systems when we already have a reverse osmosis system

17 that's not working.

18 We put in all new appliances. We

19 remodeled kitchens and bathrooms, and they get ruined

20 almost immediately. And we keep paying this
21 wonderful service fee and these increased rates for
22 all this service we're getting where we can't see a
23 human face, we can't pass money through a window or
24 drop an envelope.

1 If you go down to the water company on
2 Buenos Aires to their office, they'll tell you "We
3 can't talk to you, this is strictly -- this is not a
4 service office." If you call on the phone, you don't
5 get a friendly customer service assistant. I just
6 think that personally we are paying for services we
7 don't get and they are allowed to utilize a rate base
8 which, to a degree, they shouldn't really be entitled
9 to because we've already paid for those improvements
10 to be made.

11 You can't pay up front and then keep
12 paying -- or, you can, but you shouldn't have to pay
13 up front and then keep paying. As just an individual
14 on a relatively fixed income who also has a part-time
15 job, but it's by choice, I think someplace somebody's
16 got to draw a limit and -- draw the line, and I think
17 that all of us here tonight have asked you, the PUCO,
18 to step up and look out for our interests and
19 recognize what's gone on for years. That's really

20 all I've got to say. Thank you.

21 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Thank you.

22 (Applause.)

23 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Lynn George.

24 - - -

137

1 LYNN GEORGE

2 presented herself as a public witness, and being
3 first duly sworn, testified as follows:

4 DIRECT TESTIMONY

5 MS. GEORGE: Hello. Lynn George. I live
6 at 5564 Copenhagen, and I've been a resident of
7 Blendon Township now for 24 years.

8 I began paying the water bills about six
9 years ago. I had no intentions of coming up here and
10 speaking, but that changed recently.

11 I use only Bill Pay; I work for
12 Huntington Bank, I love it. And I made a mistake; I
13 didn't confirm my payments. I didn't press the
14 button to confirm it before the payments were made,
15 and I don't check it because I work there, I work at
16 customer service; why would I do that?

17 It affected my Ohio American Water bill,
18 it affected my credit card bill, it affected my
19 insurance. It was a big mistake. I screwed up.

20 I didn't know I screwed up because I got
21 my bill from Ohio American Water and the bill that
22 tells you that you're going to get your service
23 disconnected on such and such date looks like any
24 other bill, it looks like your regular Ohio American

138

1 Water bill. So I get it, I know my bill's not due

2 yet, I stick it in my bill slot.

3 I have no reason to believe that my bill

4 was not paid, that is until my husband came home last

5 Tuesday and found a pink slip on our front door that

6 said our water had been disconnected.

7 I have a three-year-old and a

8 one-year-old daughter. I have never, ever, ever in

9 my life had service disconnected for nonpayment. I

10 have never -- I have a credit score of 780. I pay my

11 bills. I called them because this was a mistake. I

12 screwed up, I know I did.

13 I called them to see what I could do

14 about getting my water turned back on. The customer

15 service person -- the customer service person that I

16 talked to was cold and informed me, as you've heard

17 from other people tonight, that there would be a

18 \$40 charge for them to turn it on tomorrow and about,

19 I think it was about 88 or something, I don't

20 remember. How much? Oh. It was almost \$90, which

21 is when I told my husband to turn it on that night.

22 I had enough money to pay it, to pay the

23 reconnect fee for them to come out, but I didn't want

24 to do it. I didn't want to give them any more of

1 that money. I made a mistake. I have paid my bill
2 with them for six years timely and faithfully; is
3 there any reason for them to have believed that I
4 would not pay my bill going forward?

5 For them to come out, disconnect my
6 water, leave my family with my two young children
7 with no water, it was ludicrous. I don't really know
8 how else to describe it.

9 So we made the decision that we were
10 going to wait until the next day for them to come out
11 and turn the water back on.

12 The woman informed me on the phone that
13 there was no way for me to guarantee when somebody
14 would come back out to turn it back on, it could be
15 morning, noon, night, and I could give some sort of
16 verbal agreement that I would not be liable if they
17 turned the water on and there was a leak or my house
18 started -- water was leaking I guess in my house and
19 they wouldn't be responsible for it, which I told

20 them no, that I wanted to have somebody there. But

21 that meant we had to have somebody there all day to

22 ensure, because they couldn't give me any sort of a

23 window for when somebody would come out.

24 I, again, agreed to that and the woman

1 informs me again that for payments over the phone
2 it's a dollar 50 per \$75 that's paid through this
3 third-party processing company they use, which,
4 again, I wanted my water turned on, I agreed to. And
5 so we waited. We got -- went out to another person's
6 house for dinner and waited till the next day to get
7 our water turned back on.

8 I got a late charge at my Capital One
9 account; did they shut my account off? No. I got a
10 late charge from my insurance company; did they turn
11 my -- they stop covering me for that period? No. I
12 paid a \$10 fee. I paid a late charge to Ohio
13 American Water. Did I deserve it? Yes. I screwed
14 up. Did I deserve a 40-some reconnect fee, and I had
15 to wait till the next day to be able to get water for
16 my girls and my husband and myself? No, I didn't.
17 There was no reason for them to believe that I would
18 not pay my bill.

19 And not only do I have to deal with that,

20 but then this 36 percent increase on top of that for
21 this service that we're getting. My sister lives in
22 Columbus, drinks the water in Columbus, but tells me
23 I have to have bottled water at my house when she
24 comes over to baby-sit my girls because she will not

141

1 drink our water.

2 I don't understand why we are continually

3 having to come back and beg you to help us stop Ohio

4 American Water from continuing to take advantage of

5 us. So thank you very much for your time, I

6 appreciate it.

7 (Applause.)

8 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Thank you.

9 Kathleen Durkin.

10 Is there anybody else? Why don't you

11 come on up.

12 - - -

13 KATHLEEN DURKIN

14 presented herself as a public witness, and being

15 first duly sworn, testified as follows:

16 DIRECT TESTIMONY

17 MS. DURKIN: Kathleen Durkin,

18 D-u-r-k-i-n. I reside at 3789 Caracas Drive in

19 Blendon Township.

20 I wasn't going to speak tonight
21 originally, but I've written two letters to the PUCO
22 and Governor Strickland regarding all of this, and I
23 moved to Blendon Township last June so I'm a recent
24 resident of Blendon Township. I am a victim of

1 foreclosure in the state of Ohio, so owning another
2 home has been a huge, huge accomplishment and a huge
3 dream of mine.

4 I lost my job. I'm a school teacher. I
5 was originally a French teacher, lost my job, had to
6 move to Columbus just so I could get a job. Go back
7 to school, and so now I teach Spanish and French so
8 that I can eat.

9 My mother helped me out with a down
10 payment on the home and I love my house. I do not
11 love my water bills. The first bill that arrived was
12 for 15 days and was \$27, and I didn't even live in my
13 house at the time. I was just in there moving things
14 in, so I don't even know how I used \$27 in toilet
15 water considering I wasn't even showering in that
16 house yet.

17 The water bill has been a contention for
18 quite some time, and I talked to other friends of
19 mine who also go "Well, if you can buy a house and

20 you've got your history, I can buy one too," so they
21 bought a house in Columbus. Well, we compared our
22 water bills and my girlfriend, who owns a duplex in
23 Westgate, she's spending \$90 every three months where
24 I'm spending \$80 a month for two people.

143

1 We don't water our lawns. My marigolds
2 have all but dried up. My yard looks pretty barren
3 right now, which I've heard from most people their
4 yards look the same.

5 I heard from one of my neighbors, I'm
6 shocked about his water bill with his, you know,
7 family of eight. We only have two people and I'm
8 shocked by my water bill.

9 I've talked to all of my neighbors and
10 everybody is in agreement about the rates, and I just
11 don't understand why they're so high and why we're
12 forced to pay the rates we pay for something that we
13 have to have. It's not like you can choose water.
14 You need water. I have to have water to live.

15 We do not drink bottled water in my
16 house. I am a little concerned, after listening to
17 other people now maybe I should be drinking bottled
18 water. I do have a Brita filter on my faucet so I
19 don't drink the water unless it's gone through the

20 filter. And we do have concerns about the quality of
21 water in our house because it does leave the orange
22 ring and the black rings in the toilet as I've heard
23 other people talk about.
24 We have an orange film on everything

144

1 that's white in our bathroom and it takes about a
2 week to start forming. This is a concern because I'm
3 kind of a clean freak and all of a sudden there's
4 orange in my bathroom and I don't know where that
5 came from.

6 I just implore the PUCO, everybody who
7 lives and works in our neighborhood, we're all
8 working people, we're not rich, most people in our
9 neighborhood are on some kind of a fixed income and
10 those of us who are lucky enough to be getting a
11 raise every year, you know, I'm lucky to get
12 3 percent, not 36 percent.

13 When we bought our house, the real estate
14 mortgage broker was, you know, when we did our budget
15 for the house, we budgeted 30 to 40 dollars a month
16 on water. You know, we already pay anywhere from 80
17 to a hundred dollars a month for two people and we
18 haven't even started thinking about having any
19 children yet, and I know they use a lot of water.

20 I just implore you, please reconsider
21 this action. I can't even imagine what our bill's
22 going to look like or if we can even stay in our
23 house if the water bill goes up anymore. And I know
24 I speak the same, I hear it over and over again from

145

1 everybody out here.

2 In terms of customer service, I've had
3 poor relations with the company. I did call them at
4 one point to ask about the water meter because we
5 couldn't even find it. There are a couple of blue
6 things in the yard that we were like, well, this must
7 be the water line. One of them is the shutoff and
8 one of them, I don't know what it is.

9 I called to ask about it, and they did
10 tell us there was a water meter in the home. Well,
11 we can't check it because it's in such a location we
12 can't even get to it. It's literally behind the
13 water heater in a very tight spot. I don't know how
14 anybody could get in and actually look at it because
15 we don't fit there. So I haven't even been able to
16 confirm if what they say is true about how much water
17 we actually use.

18 I asked Customer Service to please
19 explain the bill to me because on my bill every month

20 the dates overlap for the service, so it's never
21 consistent. It's never 30 days or 31 days. Some
22 months it's 37 days, some months it's 29 days, some
23 months it's 34, it just varies and the dates overlap.
24 And I called and said, "Can you please

146

1 explain this to me? What does this mean, you know,
2 my service dates? Why are they overlapping sometimes
3 a whole week?" You know, especially if they're
4 charging a service charge on our bill, it sounds to
5 me like I'm being overcharged.

6 She had no explanation for that. And
7 then she said they could send me a kit so I could
8 test my water line and see if there were any leaks,
9 and it was supposed to have some dyes in it. Well,
10 the package arrived like two weeks later than they
11 said it would, and when it arrived, it didn't have
12 the dyes in it, it just had a little booklet that
13 explained how you were supposed to do it. No dyes in
14 it at all, so it was completely useless to me.

15 I've been lucky enough not to have been
16 shut off. I can't believe people have been shut off
17 after three days of nonpayment. I guess I better get
18 my payment in because it's due on the 29th.

19 So anyway, just please, please understand

20 that people are leaving our neighborhood and in a
21 crisis of foreclosure like we're in today we just --
22 I have to protect what I already have invested in,
23 and if people start leaving my neighborhood, I'm
24 going to be losing all the way around. I'll be

147

1 losing my home all over again and I just, I don't
2 know what that would do. Thanks for listening. I
3 appreciate that you're here.

4 (Applause.)

5 - - -

6 JOSEPH KAKABAR

7 presented himself as a public witness, and being
8 first duly sworn, testified as follows:

9 DIRECT TESTIMONY

10 MR. KAKABAR: Joseph Kakabar,
11 K-a-k-a-b-a-r, 5664 Bashaw Drive.

12 Going back to Mr. Tefft, I was the other
13 one with the sewer problem, but that's not why I'm
14 here. I just want to tell you a little incident with
15 Customer Service.

16 Been here 20 years. Bills anywhere
17 between 60 to 80 dollars. I'm sorry, folks, okay,
18 that's maximum. Last fall they started to go up a
19 little bit. Went up to about 114. I said, okay,

20 son's taking 45-minute showers; he's 16. Then I get

21 a bill for \$41. I said, okay, well, he listened to

22 me, he cut back on the showers.

23 The next month, \$217. I called up

24 Customer Service and I said, "What swimming pool did

1 I fill? Did my neighbors come and hook up the hoses,
2 run down and fill his?" "Well, what do you want us
3 to do?" "Well, I want somebody to come out and check
4 the meter." "We can't do that." "Why not?" "We
5 just don't do that." I said, "You will be out here
6 tomorrow and change this meter."

7 So they did come out, take the meter. A
8 week later I get a test on that meter back from the
9 company informing me my meter was running slow. I
10 said "Okay." But they're not going to charge me for
11 the backage. It was running 25 percent slow they
12 said.

13 I said "Fine." I said, "When do you read
14 these meters?" "Oh, we read them every month." I
15 said, "I've never seen a guy read my meter in 20
16 years." So the next month, lo and behold, a
17 \$41 water bill.

18 But in the meantime between when I got
19 that bill somebody from the nice water company calls

20 me up and says, "We're going to look into this.
21 We're going to keep in touch with you because
22 something isn't right." Never heard back from them
23 after my bill went back down to \$41, and ever since
24 then it's been right back in that range again 50 to

149

1 85 dollars, somewhere in that range.

2 Customer Service cares? No. You call

3 them -- and I did pay the bill, you know, because I

4 didn't want my water shut off. My wife's disabled, I

5 got a son, you know, and all that, but I just can't

6 understand why we can justify giving these people

7 more money when, like Tom said, they're not here.

8 They're not a neighborhood company. They used to be.

9 They used to care when they were there. They don't

10 care now. They don't return phone calls.

11 You don't ever get the same Customer

12 Service. Even if you get their name, they don't work

13 there; you never talked to them. You know, the lady

14 who said she was going to call me back once she got

15 the test back on my meter, she's never called. I

16 asked for her, "There's nobody that works here by

17 that name."

18 So I don't think justifying a rate

19 increase for a company who all they want is the

20 \$40 extras, that's why they turn it off so quick,
21 they have that late fee, the payment fee, it seems
22 it's all money generated. We want the cash. Cash,
23 cash, cash. Do we want to give you service? No. We
24 want to give you a quality product? No.

150

1 So, you know, the 36 percent increase is
2 a little ridiculous, I think, in my behalf. And I'm
3 not even paying that much, so I feel sorry for these
4 other people that don't have the good water. You
5 know, I got decent water, got a little sediment, but
6 I can live with that.

7 But, you know, this is my neighborhood
8 and I chose to live here and I just -- we water a
9 little outside the house. I got a nice street and
10 that, but I've seen people move and that's the one
11 thing I hear about mostly is the water.

12 And realtors don't talk about water here.
13 I don't know if you want to, maybe one of you should
14 just call up and ask them about a house in the Ridge
15 and see if they mention the water for you. Tell them
16 you saw -- you know, ask about taxes. Taxes are
17 better than Westerville, okay. We got the benefits
18 of Westerville schools, yes. Okay, we pay the
19 property taxes. I think the township is a little bit

20 better community for a smaller community, but they

21 care.

22 The company, the water company don't

23 care, so I think you should sit back and look and say

24 why should we give them more money and what are we

151

1 getting back for it, you know. But like I said, it
2 goes from \$41 up to 216, back down to 41, and they
3 can't justify that because my meter's running slow?
4 If I'm using that much water in a month, like I said,
5 I had to fill a swimming pool somewhere, okay? Thank
6 you.

7 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Thank you.

8 (Applause.)

9 MR. TEFFT: Excuse me. Can I make
10 another comment?

11 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Sure.

12 MR. TEFFT: Again, my name is a Tom Tefft
13 and I spoke just a couple minutes ago. In my passion
14 I left out the most important part of the point I was
15 trying to make regarding my sewer.

16 They found that sewer head; apparently I
17 hid it under the driveway. And I told you that the
18 first time I had my sewer guy out, this is not the
19 guy they sent when I had their service but my sewer

20 guy, he went out about 50 feet, the second time he
21 went out, I don't know, 30 feet or something like
22 that. Well, from my clean-up that he goes in or we
23 go in to clean my line to the sewer line now that
24 they've located it, it's 23 feet. That's all I had

1 to say.

2 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Thanks.

3 We'll get you next time.

4 - - -

5 RON BRICKER

6 presented himself as a public witness, and being

7 first duly sworn, testified as follows:

8 DIRECT TESTIMONY

9 MR. BRICKER: I'm Ron Bricker, like a

10 brick with an E-R, 3669 Lima Drive. I've lived in my

11 house for almost 29 years, the current house. I

12 lived in a previous house in Huber Ridge for nine

13 years.

14 When I moved in this house 28 years ago,

15 I was a single father with a daughter. I used to

16 have a house that people used to drive by and admire,

17 stop cars to see if the flowers were real. I still

18 have planters around my trees, but you will see

19 they're all empty. I have a little bit of flowers in

20 the front of my yard because I refuse to go

21 completely with nothing. You do want to enjoy your

22 home a little bit.

23 I've always -- I am particular. I take

24 showers every single day, and I do about four loads

153

1 of laundry for one person. I look overdressed
2 because I came straight from the office in order to
3 get here, but the point I want to make is the water
4 quality is terrible, and it has gotten extremely
5 worse in the last year, year and a half.

6 I was petitioning, I was one of the
7 people who petitioned in the first house on the water
8 company at that time because the rates were
9 exorbitantly high compared to the rest of
10 Westerville, Columbus, so forth.

11 Of course, we basically found out there's
12 nothing we can do because they have a monopoly. They
13 own the lines. They said "You can go to Westerville,
14 you can go to who you want, but you're going to pay
15 to tear out all those lines."

16 Well, nobody in the housing development
17 can afford millions of dollars to tear up all the
18 streets to replace the lines, so they've got us.

19 So then I've written the letters to the

20 PUCO over the years, I've written letters to the
21 governor which all you get is a letter back saying he
22 sent it to the PUCO; I know he doesn't look at it,
23 couldn't care less. I'm sure he doesn't have time to
24 worry about it. He's got a pretty good crew to take

1 care of it.

2 The PUCO over the years and all the
3 letters, I've done petitions over the years, I walked
4 the neighborhood 20 some years ago, and we've helped
5 a little bit, like last year we were able to get a
6 little less on our increase, but it was still an
7 exorbitant increase because the company has not done
8 one thing that I've seen, other than a new company
9 bought it, to better our quality.

10 When you take a shower in the morning,
11 you don't wipe your shower down like you do in other
12 neighborhoods, you scrub your shower every single day
13 if you want a clean shower.

14 When you do dishes, you don't wash your
15 dishes, you scrub your dishes, and then you wipe
16 every dish. A dishwasher will not get it clean even
17 with all the special stuff, but I don't have a
18 dishwasher, I've never bothered wasting the money
19 because in this neighborhood, why bother.

20 So you wash your dishes by hand, but it's
21 gotten much worse. My clothes are not as clean as
22 they used to be. I use the same detergents. I add
23 whiteners. They do not come out as clean in the last
24 year or so.

155

1 As people said, I go on vacation, my
2 water bill does not go down. I live alone. I can be
3 gone two and three weeks, my water bill does not go
4 down a penny but, like they said, you can't clean
5 your toilet when you come home, you have to use all
6 kinds of cleaners, and you don't wash your toilet,
7 and I use cleaners that are supposed to be in your
8 toilet to keep it clean, you still scrub your toilets
9 every single week on your hands and knees to try to
10 make them look clean so when your company comes over,
11 it doesn't look like you're a dirty housekeeper.

12 When you have friends over, you don't
13 just wash your dishes, you wash every silverware,
14 everything separately so you can entertain your
15 friends.

16 I don't drink the water because in my
17 neighborhood in my section on Lima Drive, I can't
18 totally blame the water, but the only consistent
19 thing we have found that all of us suffer from is out

20 of seven houses four people have died of cancer.

21 Lady a cross the street is a survivor of cancer at

22 the current time.

23 I have lived in the James Hospital for

24 the last four-and-a-half years, I've had seven major

1 surgeries. I look like a healthy person, but I've
2 had seven major surgeries, split open and taken
3 tumors out of me. I've had 23 outpatient procedures;
4 May was the last one. I can't totally blame the
5 water, but I do not drink the water since so many of
6 us in that little section of seven homes and over the
7 20 years have had cancer or problems with cancer.

8 So, therefore, I wouldn't recommend
9 anybody -- I have told friends not to look at homes
10 in our neighborhood because I care about them. And I
11 said, "I'm sorry, I love my neighbors, that's what
12 kept me here for all these years is my neighbors,
13 but," I said, "I wouldn't want you to buy a home in
14 that neighborhood because I don't trust the water and
15 it's outrageously pricey."

16 And so, therefore, I'm retiring in
17 September due to all my health conditions, and I'm
18 serious thinking next summer if the prices get up to
19 get out of the neighborhood solely because I think

20 the water is unsafe and it's totally unreasonable.

21 To have somebody even consider a 30-some

22 percent increase, what have they done other than a

23 new company bought it? You know, last year I thought

24 it was an exorbitant increase because I thought they

1 haven't done anything but a new company bought it, so

2 what are they doing now in the last year?

3 Even though PUC came in and fought with

4 them to help better the water, which was already

5 better before they took it over and it got worse,

6 what have they done? Nothing. They're just a big

7 corporation wanting to make lots of money, in my

8 opinion, and the PUCO's hands are tied to an extent

9 because it's so hard to fight the monopolies that are

10 going on all over the country in everything we deal

11 with.

12 But I hope the PUCO will seriously,

13 seriously, I mean, if you lived in this neighborhood,

14 you would understand. Thirty years in this

15 neighborhood. It's been a wonderful neighborhood.

16 I've loved the people. It's convenient to

17 everything. I don't want to leave this neighborhood,

18 but I think I'm going to be leaving the neighborhood,

19 along with a lot of my neighbors who have left or

20 they died living in this neighborhood. I can't
21 totally blame the water, but there's nothing else I
22 can see out of seven houses that can cause this
23 problem.
24 And I really beg you to really say to

158

1 this company "You bought it, you bought the problems,

2 we're not going to give you increases every year."

3 And your 17 percent should have lasted

4 for five years, in my opinion. The cost of living

5 and everything going up, their costs have not gone up

6 17 percent in two years, I don't see how it can go up

7 30-some percent in a year.

8 So it's definitely a major, major

9 problem, and I think big corporation has gotten too

10 powerful. You're the only resource we have to stop

11 it, to put a halt to it. I don't care if they go

12 bankrupt and shut off the water, I'll buy and carry

13 buckets of water into my home before I think we

14 should keep paying a corporation to keep giving us

15 increases every year when I don't see a better

16 quality of water. It's gotten worse.

17 The osmosis helped years ago, but now

18 it's worse. Everybody's had to buy filters. You

19 have to buy drinking water, that's costly every

20 month, and they pay out exorbitant fees.

21 My neighbors have three small children;

22 it makes me sick every month to see them, literally

23 every month, begging the utility companies to take

24 payments because their water bill is over \$200 a

1 month. I mean, that's insane that a young couple

2 trying to support a family, and they're doing

3 everything they can do, everything, he's even changed

4 jobs to get a little bit of increase, and they're

5 doing everything they can do, and they have over

6 \$200 a month.

7 And the people don't water their lawns,

8 like they said. They don't plant the flowers they

9 want. They don't enjoy their homes anymore like we

10 used to enjoy our homes, you know. And the ones of

11 us that do put out a few flowers and a few hanging

12 baskets and spend the money, you know, we know we're

13 going to spend an unreasonable amount to have a few

14 flowers to make our home look a little presentable.

15 Our yards, we just let them go to dirt.

16 And every year I plant grass seed, and every single

17 spring in my yard when we have the rainy season, I

18 hope I can have a nice looking yard for half the

19 summer and that is unconscionable to me in this great

20 society that we have a company that has a monopoly
21 and is holding us hostage to this system and we have
22 no recourse, no matter how much money we spend on
23 attorneys or go to the PUCO or Consumers' Counsel.
24 I have called them all over the years, I

160

1 have done petitions, I have worked to do things to
2 help, and nothing has really ever stopped it from
3 getting worse than any other neighborhood because
4 they know they've got us. They've got a monopoly.
5 What can you do when you have a monopoly? The people
6 have no recourse. It's either go without water or we
7 shut you off.

8 Luckily, I've never had to be in that
9 circumstance. But I feel sorry for the ones that
10 are. And there should be something else protecting
11 these people if they're a day late, or that lady's
12 problem with her computer or something, there should
13 be some leeway in those kinds of things. They should
14 not be penalized for human mistakes to that extreme.

15 You know, small children and you cut the
16 water off to their home, that's ridiculous. And
17 yeah, if a person's not paying after several weeks
18 and you've warned them, that's one thing, but to shut
19 water off on people in two or three days, I think

20 that's immoral, totally immoral.

21 And I wouldn't want to work for that

22 company. I'd refuse to work for them because they

23 have to be unethical, and I couldn't work for a

24 company where I watched day after day after day abuse

161

1 human beings. Human beings are human beings.

2 Maybe they are all happy in their nice

3 homes with their families, but if they live in this

4 neighborhood, there's too many people suffering right

5 now due to this water and somebody has to make it

6 stop, and you have some control to say, "Hey, it's

7 time to stop. You had a huge increase last year.

8 You know, Big Corporation, you want to come in this

9 country and buy it out, fine, buy the country, but

10 we're not going to give you the right to take the

11 American people and charge exorbitant fees."

12 So I appreciate your time, I know you're

13 probably exhausted, we're like records in your mind,

14 you can't help us, you're a human being, but I know

15 you're -- my mother always raised us don't ever

16 respect anybody until they earn it; respect the

17 position. So I can respect any position, but until

18 they earn it, I don't respect the person.

19 I hope you're respectable people and

20 you'll do everything you can do to help all these
21 people, because I don't want to leave the
22 neighborhood next year, and I know these people don't
23 want to leave, and I've seen other friends leave this
24 neighborhood.

162

1 And I don't want to have to keep telling
2 friends "Don't move to this neighborhood" because
3 it's got the most wonderful people; that's what's
4 kept me here all these years. When I ended up a
5 single father, my daughter wanted to live near her
6 girlfriend in this neighborhood, and I said, "Okay,
7 we'll buy into this neighborhood until I get you
8 raised." And then I figured I would leave.

9 Well, I had such wonderful neighbors. My
10 neighbor's 78 years old, he's the original owner,
11 love him to death, he's family. And I've had so many
12 wonderful neighbors. And the young couples who are
13 moving in have been wonderful young people, and I
14 don't want to leave that neighborhood. That's what's
15 kept me here for all these years is because of the
16 neighbors, and to have to give it all up just because
17 the water's getting ridiculous and so forth, and
18 because you don't trust drinking your water, is
19 totally unconscionable. Thank you very much.

20 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Thank you.

21 (Applause.)

22 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Is there anybody else?

23 Okay.

24 - - -

163

1 PAMELA CLEGG

2 presented herself as a public witness, and being

3 first duly sworn, testified as follows:

4 DIRECT TESTIMONY

5 MS. CLEGG: Pamela Clegg, 3614 Makassar

6 Drive.

7 Thanks, everyone, for coming out, and

8 thanks to those who have stayed. I want to thank

9 particularly those who went around and were doing the

10 petitions. I really appreciate all of your letter

11 writing, the petitions. I want to thank Stu Flaherty

12 for being the trustee that did draft the letters, and

13 I know he's not here right now, and I wish he would

14 have stayed, frankly, but he is the one who drafted

15 the letters on behalf of the trustees, so I thank him

16 for that.

17 I do especially thank Jim Welch. I think

18 that I told the street reps, you know, I'm the block

19 watch coordinator in the neighborhood and, frankly, I

20 really would like to do block watch, not water watch,

21 and it really is, it really is tough to do it all.

22 We're all busy.

23 Thanks for staying. I'll be brief. I

24 don't want to repeat everything that has been said,

1 but I do want to bring up some suggestions about what
2 could be done to improve the situation.

3 We get these public notices in the paper
4 and I thought it would be great if these could be a
5 lot more clearer for the average reader. I'm not the
6 brightest person out there, and these just aren't
7 real clear. If they could improve the way these are
8 read, that would be great. You can have that, but
9 you know what they look like.

10 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Yes, could you --

11 MS. CLEGG: The other thing is I read in
12 the Westerville News and Public Opinion, let's see, I
13 believe this is November 21st, 2007, where Columbus
14 prepared to have a 12.5 percent water rate hike.
15 What I noticed about this, that's a 12.5 percent
16 water rate hike, not 36.

17 Columbus offers a discount of at least
18 15 percent for low-income households and also
19 provides a discount to qualifying seniors. I don't

20 think Ohio American Water offers any such thing, but

21 that would really be helpful.

22 Ohio American Water boasts, and this was

23 something that we were able to, because of, you know,

24 Jim's negotiations as far as I know, the summer sewer

1 bill rates that they have, and that was a small step.

2 Deduct meters would be much better, but in lieu of

3 that we have the summer sewer bill changes.

4 With AEP, AEP offers a load management

5 rate, you know, that's a reduced rate if you keep

6 your electricity rates under 700 kilowatt-hours for

7 certain months. Every year we get this slip of paper

8 that notifies us telling us that they're going to do

9 this. This, to me, is a goal. It may be just

10 pennies, but to me it's a goal and I shoot for that

11 goal.

12 But, you know, they have -- Ohio American

13 Water had an article in the News and Public Opinion

14 July 18th, 2007, after our rate increase went into

15 effect that the summer sewer bill change is aiming to

16 save money, and that is a big plus, but I think it

17 should be important that Ohio American Water does

18 notify us what months we can watch our bills and try

19 to manage so that we can have a goal that our sewer

20 rates would be less; it would be great if they would

21 do that.

22 You know, people here have stood up and

23 they have talked about the community, they have

24 talked about how I'm really sorry but I'm going to

166

1 have to move, and I'm really considering moving.

2 Honestly, community members, you may put your house
3 up for sale, but you may not get it sold because we
4 have this issue.

5 We may have to as a community go to Plan
6 B, and I'm not sure what Plan B is. I don't have the
7 answers. But, you know, I understand from Ohio
8 Consumers' Counsel when they came to talk at our
9 Huber Ridge Area Association meeting that water's
10 allowed to be a monopoly, so we need to realize that.

11 Water's allowed to be a monopoly, and
12 because water's allowed to be a monopoly and we're
13 stuck, we may have to look for some other
14 alternative. And if that means that we go to our
15 trustees and we just have to brainstorm and do
16 something different, then we're going to need to do
17 that.

18 I would just urge you all to remember
19 that Jim Welch did do a lot of work, and remember who

20 has worked on this kind of thing when election time

21 comes around. That's really it. Thank you.

22 (Applause.)

23 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Thank you.

24 - - -

167

CAROLYN CORDRAY

presented herself as a public witness, and being
first duly sworn, testified as follows:

DIRECT TESTIMONY

MS. CORDRAY: I'm Carolyn Cordray,
spelled C-o-r-d-r-a-y. I live at 3734 Caracas Drive,
and I would like to read into the docket a letter
from a resident who has been unable to testify
tonight.

It is a letter to Jim Welch from Dorothy
Crawford, spelled C-r-a-w-f-o-r-d. She lives at 3724
Paris. This is dated August 19th. Again, it's a
letter to Jim Welch from Dorothy regarding the
upcoming meeting with the PUCO.

"Jim: Since the meeting with the PUCO is
this Wednesday (tomorrow) and I haven't had any
return calls from you, I'm going to put in writing
information that might be helpful at the meeting.
Please use your discretion as to whether you want to

20 say anything about these things.

21 "This is the touchy part. Last February

22 I had a water meter installed in my home that

23 measures the water used by the gallon. (I checked it

24 out and as long as the meter was after the OAW meter

168

1 it is permissible. However, I have not wanted the
2 PUCO or the OAW to know anything about this until I
3 could get a good record on water use and am not sure
4 that this is the time to bring this up or not.)

5 "With this being the last chance we have
6 before a decision is made regarding the increase in
7 rates, after you study the figures do you think it
8 would be wise to use the information at the meeting?
9 I have made a copy of the records I have been keeping
10 and have attached it for you to study. If you have
11 any questions please give me a call. Home evenings
12 882-8243; work 888-7733.

13 "Summary of what the record shows
14 regarding amount of water used and what has been
15 charged: Charged for five months, (February through
16 June) for 1 CCF equaling 3,740 gallon.

17 "Charged only service charges" --

18 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Let me stop you there
19 for a minute. I guess I'm not sure where this is

20 going. This is some other resident's letter that

21 you're reading in?

22 MS. CORDRAY: Uh-huh, she's been

23 overcharged, hideously overcharged, that's where it's

24 going.

169

1 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Why don't we just send
2 that letter in and make it part of the record if she
3 wants to do that.

4 MR. WELCH: You can enter it in the
5 information tonight, couldn't you?

6 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Pardon?

7 MR. WELCH: She could put it right here
8 and enter it in as docket information tonight.

9 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Yeah.

10 FROM THE FLOOR: I'd like to hear it.

11 MR. FLETCHER: I'd like to hear it also.

12 EXAMINER BULGRIN: How much longer?

13 MR. FLETCHER: Is there a summary that
14 gives you the totals?

15 EXAMINER BULGRIN: You can read it if you
16 want to read it, but I don't think -- I don't think
17 it's really appropriate for you to be reading
18 somebody else's letter into the, I mean if it was her
19 letter and she wanted to read it, that would be fine,

20 okay? Is there anything you wanted to testify to

21 personally?

22 MS. CORDRAY: No. I agreed to read this

23 for her.

24 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Yeah, why don't we

170

1 just enter that into the record.

2 MS. CORDRAY: Okay.

3 MS. CRAWFORD: I ask that she -- I'm

4 Dorothy, and I ask that she read that, and if you'll

5 give her permission, I would appreciate that.

6 EXAMINER BULGRIN: I didn't know you were

7 here. Sorry. Okay. Oh, yeah, then go ahead.

8 MS. CORDRAY: I just said she was unable

9 to testify.

10 EXAMINER BULGRIN: That's fine. That's a

11 different story.

12 MS. CORDRAY: "Charged only 'service

13 charge' for 1 month (July).

14 "Charged 1 month (August) for 2 CCF

15 equaling 1,496 gallons.

16 "Total charged, 5,236 gallons.

17 "Water used from 2/11 of this year to

18 August 8th equaling 4,770 gallons on the meter

19 measuring by the gallon.

20 "Difference in meter readings," meaning
21 she was overcharged, "466 gallons."
22 "The July charge was for service only of
23 \$9.41 because they had the same reading (526) for
24 both June and July. This means they have now charged

1 the service charge of \$9.41 twice for the same CCF.

2 "The 4,770 gallons of water went through

3 the filter (see picture of the filter)." She must

4 have enclosed a picture. "The important point here

5 is that what really counts is how much water goes

6 through the filter, not how long the filter has been

7 in place. Also, the 4,770 gallons would probably be

8 about one month of water used by a family of three or

9 more but in this case this is a one person home.

10 This shows me that the quality of the water has not

11 improved sufficiently to be acceptable.

12 "Other information that needs to be

13 stressed: I do not use OAW for any of the following:

14 Cooking, washing fruits and vegetables, brushing my

15 teeth, drinking, cleaning around the house where any

16 food or eating takes place, washing dishes in the

17 dishwasher. I put OAW water in my sink and add

18 Clorox to wash dishes by hand then heat bottled water

19 to rinse them. This is really not an acceptable way

20 to do dishes.

21 "Also not an acceptable way to feel one

22 has to live because of the condition of the OAW

23 water. That means it is much more expensive having

24 to buy bottled water for all cooking purposes,

1 et cetera. From July 5th, 2008 to August 12th,

2 2008 I paid \$32.27 for bottled water. I also eat

3 most of my lunches and dinners at a restaurant so I

4 won't have to cook or wash dishes in OAW water.

5 "I don't know if my record has been kept

6 long enough to prove anything yet for certain.

7 Perhaps if we had a few more months to keep the

8 record it would be more impressive. I know the first

9 four months I watched very closely the amount of

10 water I used so I would stay within the 748 gallon

11 per month. Then I told Pam Clegg that I was going to

12 intentionally go over one CCF during the fifth month

13 to see how much they would bill me. I evidently

14 didn't go over far enough to show what I thought it

15 might show. I'm not sure I really understand their

16 billing for June, July, and August but perhaps

17 another month and another bill will begin to show a

18 pattern more clearly.

19 "Jim, I think this can be proven that

20 they are overcharging us on our water bills by
21 charging by the CCF instead of the actual gallon
22 used. It may take time. However, I'm very weary in
23 trying to fight this battle which has really been
24 going on for years. What I want to do is sell my

1 property and get moved out of the area where OAW is
2 involved. I would hope I could sell my home to
3 someone who would pursue this water problem to its
4 conclusion so that would mean selling to someone who
5 would continue to record the water usage, et cetera.
6 Perhaps you might know, or be able to find someone,
7 who would fit that into their situation.

8 "If this could be proved, I would think
9 the OAW would have to pay their customers back what
10 they overcharged. Just think of how many people
11 would benefit if we could prove we are being
12 overcharged. That would be worth pursuing to the end
13 but feeling that the water is not good enough to use
14 for everything in my home I'm sick and tired of
15 having to live like this. So, I just want to get out
16 of the situation.

17 "I should be able to sell my house for a
18 better price since there is the potential of proving
19 what needs to be proved. There certainly should be

20 someone who would be willing to keep the record going
21 and be willing to do what they could to benefit the
22 people in this community. Even though most people
23 aren't willing to get involved in a thing like this,
24 I'm sure if someone took the responsibility of

1 fighting this battle for them they would be very

2 appreciative.

3 "I am planning on being at the meeting

4 but would appreciate it if you would address these

5 points I have included in this letter. I am not one

6 to get up in front of people and be able to get the

7 points across in a way that could cause the people to

8 really fight for what is right.

9 "Again, if you have any questions or

10 concerns please feel free to contact me at the

11 numbers I have given previously in this letter.

12 "Respectfully" signed Dorothy Crawford.

13 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Thank you.

14 (Applause.)

15 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Who do we have left?

16 - - -

17 TIFFANY HOLLATZ

18 presented herself as a public witness, and being

19 first duly sworn, testified as follows:

20 DIRECT TESTIMONY

21 MS. HOLLATZ: My name is Tiffany Hollatz,

22 H-o-l-l-a-t-z. I live at 3518 Makassar Drive here in

23 Huber Ridge.

24 I decided to speak because I thought

175

1 surely after three hours somebody would have said one
2 of the things that I wanted to mention is there are
3 some times the water runs much more orange than
4 others. So say you're doing laundry, you have to
5 fill the machine and make sure that the water is
6 clear before you can put your laundry in, and if it's
7 not, you have to just send it all down the drain so
8 you're actually using more than you need just to
9 waste it, you know.

10 I think my other concerns have been hit
11 upon, but I am concerned now after hearing about
12 people going away and their bills aren't changing, is
13 there anybody who monitors how they monitor that?
14 They're just not throwing a dart, saying "Huh, let's
15 charge them this much this month"? I mean, how -- is
16 that policed at all?

17 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Well, yes, actually
18 that's why our staff does a report.

19 MS. HOLLATZ: Okay.

20 EXAMINER BULGRIN: And there is a team of

21 accountants and experts that actually look at that.

22 MS. HOLLATZ: Okay.

23 EXAMINER BULGRIN: In addition, you've

24 got the Office of Consumers' Counsel who acts as the

176

1 people's representative at least for the residential

2 consumers. So yes, it is being looked at.

3 MS. HOLLATZ: Okay. Thank you.

4 (Applause.)

5 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Anyone else? Yes,

6 ma'am.

7 MS. SPERLING: I was actually registered

8 and had to leave.

9 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Come on down.

10 - - -

11 PAMELA SPERLING

12 presented herself as a public witness, and being

13 first duly sworn, testified as follows:

14 DIRECT TESTIMONY

15 MS. SPERLING: My name's Pamela Sperling,

16 S-p-e-r-l-i-n-g, 6412 Saddle Lane Court, Westerville.

17 Now, I may be beating a dead horse,

18 something someone else has already said because I was

19 gone for a little bit, but we live on Saddle Lane

20 Court which is two houses -- we're the third house in
21 from the freeway. So it's my understanding we're at
22 the end of a line and so we get a lot of like back --
23 I would call it like rust and a lot of colored water,
24 a lot of dirt and sediment and stuff in the water.

177

1 So I call to report it, and they come out
2 and, quote, flush the lines on occasion; it's been a
3 while since I've done it. But like when we go on
4 vacation or go away at any time we get like the red
5 rust line in the toilet; if we're only gone like two
6 or three days. Our kids live out of state so we
7 travel some, so we have a lot of that.

8 And we moved here in 1986. When we moved
9 here from Knox County, Mount Vernon, Ohio, our water
10 bill tripled, and it's really about triple of what
11 Mount Vernon rates are now, you know, it's kind of a
12 comparison to like Columbus or whatnot.

13 But I would recommend that the PUCO would
14 require Ohio American Water to clean up the water and
15 get us quality water before we give them a 1 percent
16 raise. We're already paying way too much money for
17 what we get. I mean, the quality is awful.

18 I too buy drinking water. We buy ice.
19 Of course, we don't know what kind of water we're

20 really getting in buying drinking water, ice, and so
21 forth, but when you figure all the money we all spend
22 on water products, I mean, we're spending more than
23 our average whatever people pay per month just for
24 the water bill. So they need to get their water

1 cleaned up before we pay them anything extra.

2 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Thank you.

3 (Applause.)

4 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Anyone else? Going
5 once. Mr. Welch.

6 MR. WELCH: Yes. I'd just like to bring
7 light to the official count that I have as President
8 of Huber Ridge Area Association tonight. We asked
9 everybody to come in and register as they walked in
10 the door, so we have an official count. I just want
11 to make the information here, this is residents that
12 signed in only, and I have 232 signatures here of
13 people who registered just to come into this meeting
14 tonight, and I think there's another paper out there
15 on the table people who might have walked in in the
16 last couple hours. I know that they told me there
17 was eight or so out there still yet.

18 So I just want to give information to
19 know there was well over 200 people attending this

20 meeting tonight. Whether you got up and testified or
21 not, the statement of the amount of people here, that
22 does reiterate again, Center for Disease Control
23 records, that's well over what I said of 7.7 percent.
24 Thank you.

179

1 EXAMINER BULGRIN: Thank you. Anything
2 further?

3 Okay. If not, the evidentiary hearing is
4 going to be next Tuesday, so if you do know of
5 somebody that couldn't make it tonight or wants to
6 come in and testify, it will be next Tuesday at
7 10 o'clock, but you'll have to go down to the
8 Columbus office.

9 If there's nothing further, then this
10 hearing is concluded. Oh, I'm sorry.

11 COMMISSIONER ROBERTO: I just want to
12 hold you for 30 seconds longer to express my
13 gratitude to you for the time that you've taken this
14 evening to share this information and to commit to
15 you that it is in the record and it is important to
16 us, and all of the information in the docket will be
17 considered before any final decision is made. So
18 thank you very much for your time this evening.

19 FROM THE FLOOR: Thank you.

20 (The proceedings concluded at 9:45 p.m.)

21 - - -

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180

CERTIFICATE

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I do hereby certify that the foregoing is a
true and correct transcript of the proceedings taken
by me in this matter on Wednesday, August 20, 2008,
and carefully compared with my original stenographic
notes.

Maria DiPaolo Jones, Registered
Diplomate Reporter and CRR and
Notary Public in and for the
State of Ohio.

My commission expires June 19, 2011.
(MDJ-3241)

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Case No(s). 07-1112-WS-AIR

Summary: Transcript Ohio American Water Public Hearing
8-20-08 electronically filed by Mrs. Jennifer D. Duffer on behalf of Armstrong & Okey, Inc.