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PUCO
Docketing Div.
180 E Broad St
Cols, Ohio 43215

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To whom it may concern:

Before any rate hikes are allowed by AEP, first consider the outrageous salary the CEO is paid. This does not include fringe benefits and almost exclusive use of a rumored three engine jet to run him around the globe on "business" as well as trips to his summer and winter homes.

Does this all justify we customers to pay higher rates?

An AEP customer

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Utility bills line some deep pockets

Every time an Ohioan turns around, a public utility is trying to pick his or her pocket. Yet Ohioans already pay top dollar for gasoline and groceries, not to mention rent and house payments.

THOMAS SUDDES

Still, gas and electric utilities, like vultures circling someone dying in a desert, jack up Ohioans' bills. A reader suggested that other readers might care to learn how sweet life is for utility fat cats.

To win rate increases, gas and electric companies cry the blues to the Public Utilities Comfort Commission of Ohio (as, functionally, it is). But utility executives themselves don't have to fret about household bills, given the mammoth salaries their rates produce.

Consider a yardstick: According to Census data, median household income in Ohio is about $43,400. That is, about half of all Ohio households receive income greater than that; about half receive less. But for 2007, according to reports that utilities themselves file with the Securities and Exchange Commission:

• Total annual compensation for American Electric Power Co. Chairman Michael G. Morris (the Columbus Southern Power and Ohio Power companies) was $19.7 million. In terms of Ohio's median household income, that equals the income of 453 Ohio households.

• Total annual compensation for Thomas F. Farrell II, chairman of Dominion Resources Inc. (which owns what used to be the East Ohio Gas Co.) was $15.1 million, — the income of 348 households.

• Total annual compensation for Paul M. Barbas, president of DPL Inc. (Dayton Power and Light Co.) was $1.8 million — 41 households.

• Total annual compensation for Duke Energy Corp.'s James E. Rogers was $9.9 million — 228 households. Duke owns what was the Cincinnati Gas & Electric Co. Included in Rogers's total was $5,000 for charitable gifts made in his name.

• Total annual compensation for Anthony J. Alexander, president of Akron's FirstEnergy Corp. (the Illuminating, Ohio Edison and Toledo Edison companies) was $15.6 million — 359 households. Included in Alexander's total compensation was about $94,000 in perks, such as country club dues, entertainment tickets, holiday gifts and personal flights on a FirstEnergy plane, which the company's board requires Alexander to use "for security reasons."

• Total annual compensation for Robert C. Skaggs Jr., head of NiSource Inc. (Columbia Gas of Ohio) was $1.6 million — 37 households.

• Total annual compensation for Niel C. Ellerbrook, head of Vectren Corp. (natural-gas service in the Dayton area) was $3.5 million. — 81 households.

This is the kind of corporate clout that stares Ohio householders in the face when they open utility bills. Yet one of the reasons Ohioans gave themselves the right of initiative and referendum in 1912 — the power to write their own laws or second-guess laws legislators pass — was to checkmate the Statehouse power of utilities.

The first truly big freelance Statehouse lobbyist (lobbying for fees, not salary) was likely Harry M. Daugherty, Warren Harding's pal, who got rich 90 years ago by greasing Columbus for what's now AT&T.

Today, unfortunately, rather than rein in monopoly, political packagers misuse the initiative and referendum to pump up presidential turnout (banning same-sex "marriage" in '04, for George W. Bush; requiring paid sick leave in '08, for Barack Obama); to exploit the poor (payday "lending") or make false promises (casino gambling).

These campaigns help pay someone's bills — but not yours.

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