

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF OHIO
Consumer Service Division
Memorandum

CASE ID: 00241997

COMPANY:

CUSTOMER: Jill Rindfuss

ADDRESS: 108 Somerset Road, Delaware, Ohio 43015

SERVICE ADDRESS: 108 Somerset Road, Delaware, Ohio 43015

AIQ: LE Energy LLC

NIQ: 614-565-2182

DOCKETING CASE #: 17-1843-EL-ORD

SUBJECT: LE Energy LLC - Cancellation Issues

Please docket the attached in the case number above.

I am writing to document my frustration with a gas and power supplier (Utility Gas & Power) and to hopefully encourage a look at how rates are communicated with consumers.

In April 2018, I signed up with Utility Gas & Power for what I understood to be a one-month promotional rate. My complaint is not that the rate changed, as that is what I did understand it would do. My complaint is that I was never notified what the variable rate would be. I was told the variable rate would be 'competitive', so I wasn't concerned with it going variable. It wasn't until a few months into it did I start to realize that my bill was really high, but thought it was due to increased consumption. When I finally got around to pulling all the statements and locating the very difficult to find rate information, I discovered that the rate was 122% the 'competitive' variable rate (.1199/kWh vs .054), and had been for 7 months!!

In a panic, as I realized that from May – Nov, I was paying 122% more than I needed to, I started to research other providers and immediately switched to a different provider. In hopes that Utility Gas & Power would consider some sort of a correction, I called them and was met with a very defensive, rude customer service rep who refused to do anything, including refusing to lower the rate for the final month that I was with them while I had to wait for the service to move to a new provider. I am sick to have since done the math and discovered that I overpaid nearly \$500 for my utilities in 2018.

Every person I have talked to about this experience has responded with two consistent comments: (1) it's buyer's beware and (2) these companies are doing business this way knowing the rates are confusing and hidden and count on the consumer to not look at their statements.

My complaints are as follows:

- (1) It's obvious to me and to others that these practices are intended to be deceptive.
- (2) There is no reason why rates can not be communicated ... One excuse that I've been given is that variable rates change so much and so often that it would be impossible to communicate every time they change ... For the duration of my time with Utility Gas & Power, with the exception of that very first month, the rate never varied from \$0.1199. There is no reason why this could not have been communicated when it was change from the promotion rate ... A postcard, an email or even a **VISIBLE NOTE** in the statement could easily be required. They had not trouble sending me two different letters to confirm the original agreement.

My suggestions are as follows:

- (1) Suppliers should be required to communicate what the variable rate will be once move out of the promotion period.
- (2) ANY TIME AND EVERY TIME that the rate changes on an account, suppliers should be required to communicate in some with the consumer that change made to their account.
- (3) If original agreements are being made for a promotion price and/or for promotional period and the consumer does not agree to a new contract with the third party supplier (Utility Gas & Power) then consumers should automatically be returned to their utility provider (ie, AEP), not automatically signed up for a new contract/new price without their agreement, at the sole disgression of the third party supplier (ie, variable rate with Utility Gas & Power).
- (3) Statements provided by utility provider should be required to show the rate in a larger font, more visible location on the bill. These rates are confusing as they are shown in different formats (\$1.199 vs 0.1199) along with all kinds of other numbers and rates on the format. It would be really helpful to have a special, designated box or area that shows the rate vs. competitive AEP rate.

I really do appreciate your review of my experience and your consideration of these suggestions. This has been a very frustrating and disenfranchising experience.

Thank you for your time,
Jill Rindfuss
108 Somerset Road
Delaware, OH 43015
614-565-2182

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Summary: Public Comment received via website electronically filed by Docketing Staff on behalf of Docketing.