

FILE

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July 28, 2008

Honorable Ted Strickland  
Governor's Office  
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PUCO

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RECEIVED-DOCKETING DIV

RE: PUCO Case # 07-1112-WS-AIR (Ohio American Water rate increase)

Governor Strickland,

Once again as customers of Ohio American Water (OAW), the residents of Blendon Township are faced with a request for an obscene rate increase in water and sewer fees. We have learned that the PUCO is in favor of granting the 33% increase requested as well as granting additional fees that we were not requested by OAW. These fees include but are not limited to return check fees, turn on notices, and new service requests.

Governor Strickland, I do not know where to start in voicing objections to this increase.

Ohio seems to rank at or near the bottom when various surveys look at quality of life issues. Money magazine's list of the top 100 best small cities for 2008 included only one city in Ohio. Kiplinger's Personal Finance magazine for July 2008 listed ten of the best places to live in the country and none of them was in Ohio. The criteria they used for choosing a city were strong economy, abundant jobs, **reasonable living costs**, and fun things to do.

In written testimony given to Congress by Professor Elizabeth Warren of Harvard Law School, she stated that the middle class is being squeezed by soaring expenses and stagnant wages. When adjusted for inflation the average family income dropped by \$1175 between 2000 and 2007. Childcare costs have soared. To quote Professor Warren "There have never been since the Depression so many families standing right on the edge."

Ohio is faced with a stagnant economy, job losses, and home foreclosures. We do not need another reason for people and businesses to leave the state.

On a personal level, there are twenty-eight residences on my street. Three properties are rentals. Two properties are for sale (one is occupied). Nine residents are retired and living on a fixed income. Four residents are single mothers raising children. Excluding the empty and rental properties, 37% of the residents are on limited or fixed income.

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The PUCO Mission statement is a joke. The statement reads, "Our mission is to assure all residential and business consumers access to adequate, safe and reliable utility services at fair prices, while facilitating an environment that provides competitive choices." The PUCO granted an 11% percent increase last year and is in favor of a 33% increase this year. **This is a fair price?** Competitive choices? **There are no competitive choices.** With annual increases for workers averaging four percent (4% per annum) it will take more than ten years of increases to keep up with the increase in water/sewer fees assuming the prices for other utilities, food, energy, and health care remains unchanged.

The request by OAW is unrealistic. Gas and electric companies have raw material costs that OAW does not have. OAW does not need to purchase anything except treatment chemicals on a regular basis. The raw material, water, is provided by nature free of charge.

Our area pays extra for reverse osmosis yet my water contains heavy deposits of calcium carbonate. I have been told that nothing can be done. My fixtures have hard white deposits unless I wipe them dry after each use. I am paying for a service that is useless. My toilets have a constant ring that is caused by a type of mold. Even bleach will not completely remove it. The water company tested my water and told me this is what I have to live with. OAW expects me to pay more for this service?

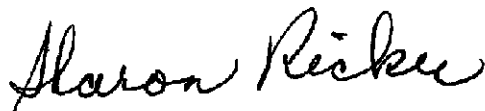
I would like to know how the PUCO could even consider an increase of this size much less grant increases that were not even requested by the company. It seems evident that members of the PUCO do not represent the interests of the residents of this state but the interests of big business.

OAW did not receive the price they were expecting with their IPO last year and this appears to be a back door attempt to recover lost monies. RWE, the parent company of OAW before it was spun off, was accused of unreasonable pricing which enabled the company to post profits in excess of 20% annually. It would appear that OAW is following the same corporate behavior.

An increase of any kind, after an 11% increase last year is unconscionable. The citizens of Ohio are facing higher health care costs, energy costs, rising food prices, and inflation. Since we have no "competitive choice", our only hope is intervention by your office.

Governor Strickland, the citizens of this state need your help.

Respectfully yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sharon Ricker". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Sharon Ricker