

May 2, 2011

I wish to comment on the petition (docket item EL11-001) submitted by Black Hills Power to add another 'line item' split-off charge to consumers' utility bills, an item which, if approved by the PUC (hereafter referred to as "You" or "Your"), would once more allow an 'end run' around the necessity for the utilities to petition You for future rate increases.

Consumers (hereafter referred to as "We", "Us", "Our") have seen this kind of end-run several times before with Our other utility bills:

- Natural gas—two items You have approved:
 - a) PGA (Purchased Gas Adjustment)—in my opinion, one of the biggest shell games to have been perpetrated on us. Not only does this allow the utility to bypass Your rate review, I think it relieves them of the necessity for long-term planning, possibly even adding to the volatility of supplies and prices.
 - b) CTA (Conservation Program Tracking Mechanism)—or as I call it, "Charge To Advertise to me". I have no idea why this item is titled a 'tracking mechanism', (explained nowhere on my bill), but as I'm sure You know, it allows the gas company to charge me to advertise to me. This charge, although only a small part of Our bill (Black Hills— \$0.007 per dk), allows them to collect additional revenue to the tune of \$3000 per 100,000 customers (a **very** conservative estimate based on my small usage).
- Telephone rates—the taxes and fees associated with and allowed by various agencies are too numerous to list here. Suffice it to say that my telephone bill consists of 40% taxes and 'mandated' fees, an amount I feel is close to intolerable.

In my opinion, this proposed 'item' is indeed a necessary capital investment expense, and, as such, should be borne by the utility's investors, not something to be paid by Us through a line-item charge. I realize that, eventually, We may bear the cost, but it seems to me this is the way it should be accomplished.

I do not choose to spend the time, nor do I have the desire, to keep up with the daily operation of the PUC. Although Black Hills Powers' petition was submitted on January 25, 2011, I became aware of this petition only recently, by flyer insertion in my latest billing, postmarked 4/27/11. I don't feel this is sufficient time to react to this petition, which, to me, smacks of an attempt by the utility company to let this pass as quietly as possible under the 'radar'.

I can only speak for myself, but I'd be willing to bet that many others feel similar. I am sick and tired of all of these unregulated fees and surcharges being allowed by You. These utility companies, for decades, have been allowed to operate as a monopoly, with the agreement made long ago that they be regulated by a 'Public Utilities Commission'. I don't feel that we've seen much 'regulation' by You for some time.

I, for one, insist that you deny Black Hills Power's petition on this matter.

A very dissatisfied constituent, I am
James L. Winkler



Signed copies to follow.