

From: LethalxSzn [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, February 18, 2026 10:53 AM
To: PUC-PUC <PUC@state.sd.us>
Subject: [EXT] Public Comment – Docket EL25-024 (Xcel Energy Rate Increase)

From: Ignacio Velazquez

[REDACTED]
Sioux Falls, SD 57107
[REDACTED]

Date: February 18, 2026

RE: Public Comment – Docket EL25-024 – Xcel Energy Interim and Proposed Rate Increases

Chairman Gary Hanson and Commissioners,

I am submitting this comment as a ratepayer and resident of Sioux Falls. I work 12-hour shifts at the South Dakota State Penitentiary. I live alone in an apartment. I am often not home. I have made no changes to my appliances, heating, or lifestyle.

My Xcel Energy bill has increased by hundreds of dollars per month with no change in my usage.

I am not alone. Everyone I talk to—neighbors, coworkers, families across Sioux Falls—is seeing the same thing. Bills spiking by \$100, \$200, more. This is not a marginal adjustment. This is a financial crisis for working people who are already stretching every dollar.

I first contacted the PUC on February 10, 2026, filing a formal complaint and requesting an investigation into whether these increases are just, reasonable, and fairly distributed. On February 13, I received a response from Consumer Affairs Manager Deb Gregg. That response acknowledged my concerns but did not investigate them. It explained the utility's rate process and quoted state law. It did not answer a single substantive question I raised.

On February 16, I replied, restating my concerns and demanding that my complaint be treated as a formal investigation. I cited SDCL 49-1-11, which grants the PUC authority to act on complaints involving public utilities.

Today, February 18, I received a second response from Ms. Gregg. She did not address any of my questions. Instead, she informed me that I had cited the wrong statute—SDCL 49-13-4 applies to telecommunications, not electric service—and directed me to submit a public comment in this docket instead.

I am now doing so. And I expect this comment to be entered into the official record and considered by this Commission.

I am formally requesting that the Commission investigate the following:

1. Whether residential customers are being disproportionately burdened by Xcel's interim rate increase and proposed permanent rates.

Xcel Energy CEO Bob Frenzel has publicly stated that bringing large data centers to Sioux Falls will lower rates for everyone. My bill has gone up, not down. I request that the Commission make public its analysis of how costs are allocated between residential, commercial, and industrial customer classes. Show us the math. Prove that working families are not subsidizing grid upgrades for corporate data centers while being told to absorb the cost.

2. Whether executive compensation was reviewed as part of this rate case.

Public records show Xcel CEO Bob Frenzel received a \$9 million retention bonus on top of his \$5.8 million annual salary. His total compensation ratio is 151 to 1 compared to the median employee. Ratepayers should not be forced to subsidize multi-million-dollar executive pay through a monopoly utility. Did PUC staff examine executive compensation during its "comprehensive review" of Xcel's expenses? If so, what was the finding? If not, why not?

3. Whether customers were adequately informed before these extreme increases took effect.

Ms. Gregg's response states that Xcel provided notice through a bill insert in August 2025 and a bill message in December 2025. A bill insert is not meaningful notice when bills rise by hundreds of dollars. Working people do not have time to monitor PUC dockets or parse fine-print inserts. The utility and the regulator have a shared responsibility to ensure transparency that actually reaches people before the shock hits.

4. Why my initial complaint was never investigated.

I followed the process. I filed a formal complaint. That complaint was acknowledged but never acted upon. I was told I cited the wrong law and redirected to a public comment process. That is not accountability. That is paperwork. The PUC's duty under SDCL 49-1-

11 is to establish procedures for acting upon complaints. I am asking: Was my complaint ever assigned for investigation? If not, why? And what is the point of a "consumer affairs" office if it cannot investigate consumer complaints?

Conclusion

The PUC's job is to ensure that rates are "just and reasonable." A system where a prison worker's bill increases by hundreds of dollars while a utility CEO banks millions is neither just nor reasonable. It is exploitation enabled by monopoly and ratified by process.

I am asking this Commission to do its job: investigate, hold Xcel accountable, and protect the working people of South Dakota.

I request a response to this comment and notification of any public hearings where ratepayers can speak directly to the Commission.

Respectfully,

Ignacio Velazquez

[REDACTED]

Sioux Falls, SD 57107

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