From: John Meyers [redacted]
Sent: Thursday, August 27, 2026 9:18 PM
To: PUC-PUC <PUC@state.sd.us>
Subject: [EXT] Public Comment, EL26-003 and EL26-024 Black Hills Energy Rate Increases

South Dakota Public Utilities Commission,

I am writing to oppose the substantial Black Hills Energy rate increases associated with EL26-003 and EL26-024. While these are separate proceedings, I believe the Commission needs to consider their combined effect on customers.

Under EL26-003, Black Hills Energy's figures show an estimated increase of approximately 25% for the average Total Electric residential customer. The separate Lange II proposal in EL26-024 would then add approximately 20% to the average Total Electric residential bill. If both impacts occurred at those percentages, they would compound to approximately a 45% increase over the original bill.

I am a Total Electric Residential customer and depend on electricity to heat and cool my home. My winter electric bills can already approach $500 per month with summer months being over $300. Using Black Hills Energy's published average percentage impacts as an illustration, a $500 bill could become over $600 after the first increase and $754 after Lange II. That is potentially more than $250 additional per month without using any more electricity.

What makes increases of this magnitude particularly frustrating is the lack of meaningful programs available to customers to offset these costs. There are limited programs for things such as EV charging, and solar is also a poor option when customers do not receive retail-rate compensation for excess electricity they send back to the grid. If customers are going to face increases of this magnitude, there should be meaningful programs that actually give them practical ways to reduce their overall electric costs.

My detached personal garage is another example. It is located on my residential property and has no commercial use whatsoever, yet because it has a separate meter, it is classified as General Service rather than residential. This subjects my personal garage to demand/capacity pricing, meaning part of my bill can be determined by how much electricity I happen to draw at one time rather than simply how much electricity I use during the month. A compressor or other equipment operating briefly can create a demand charge even though the shop's total monthly electricity consumption is extremely low.

On a recent bill, the shop portion was approximately $82 despite relatively low usage, with about $61 going toward delivery/distribution rather than the electricity supply itself. I have also been billed separate capacity charges on this meter. I find it unreasonable that a personal residential garage is subjected to this type of non-residential pricing simply because it requires a separate meter, with apparently no residential secondary-meter program available as an alternative.

I am also concerned about what increases of this magnitude mean for the broader Black Hills community. Many of my neighbors are retired and living on fixed incomes. Some spent decades working in the mines and other difficult or hazardous industries in the Black Hills and planned their retirements around the reasonable expectation that basic household expenses would remain manageable. They cannot simply increase their income by 25%, 30%, or 50% to keep pace with rapidly rising utility costs.

For someone who carefully budgeted to remain in the home they worked most of their life to own, increases of this magnitude can mean cutting other necessities or eventually questioning whether they can afford to remain in their home at all. I believe the Commission needs to consider these residents when evaluating the cumulative impact of these requests.

This is why I believe EL26-003 and EL26-024 need to be considered not only individually, but together and in the context of what South Dakota households can realistically afford. Potentially taking an already $500 winter electric bill toward $750 per month is not a minor adjustment. It represents a significant change in the affordability of an essential utility.

Customers are facing rapidly increasing bills while being offered very few meaningful ways to reduce those costs. Between limited customer programs, poor economics for excess residential solar generation, and rate classifications such as the one applied to my residential garage, the options available to customers simply do not match the magnitude of the increases being requested.

I respectfully ask that these increases be reduced or rejected and that greater consideration be given to the cumulative impact on South Dakota residents, particularly Total Electric households and retirees on fixed incomes, as well as to meaningful customer programs and fairer rate structures that actually give customers practical ways to control their electric costs.

Thank you for considering my comments

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