

From: PUC
Sent: Tuesday, March 24, 2026 9:42 AM
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: [EXT] Re[2]: Black Hills Electric rate ease...

Ms. Ranta:

Thank you for taking the time to share your concerns regarding Black Hills Energy's proposed rate increase. You'll find the full docket, which was opened on February 19, 2026, on the PUC website: [EL26-003](#) - In the Matter of the Application of Black Hills Power, Inc. dba Black Hills Energy for Authority to Increase Rates For its Utility Service in South Dakota. Your input is an important part of the public process.

To help you better understand how the PUC evaluates rate increase requests, I encourage you to review the [Electric Rate Increase Request Info Guide](#) available on the PUC website. This guide outlines the steps and considerations involved in our review.

We understand that affordability is a significant concern for customers, especially given recent economic pressures. The Public Utilities Commission takes these matters seriously and is committed to a thorough and transparent review of the proposal. As part of this process, Black Hills Energy is required to provide detailed justification for the proposed increase.

Commission staff analysts and legal counsel are currently conducting a comprehensive review of the company's financial data, operational needs, and the potential impact on customers. This includes multiple rounds of discovery, where staff and expert witnesses request and analyze detailed information from the utility.

Once this comprehensive review is complete, the Commission will publicly discuss the case, ask further questions, and deliberate based on the evidence presented. Each commissioner will then vote to approve, deny, or modify the requested rate increase. It's important to note that the Commission is legally obligated to base its decision on the facts and applicable law and cannot deny a rate increase request without fully vetting the record. We are required to arrive at a reasonable and legally enforceable decision.

I understand your concerns about the components of your electric bill. If you would like an explanation beyond what is provided on your bill, I encourage you to contact Black Hills Energy's customer service at 888-890-5554.

The legislation you referred to regarding wildfires is [Senate Bill 36](#), which was signed by Gov. Rhoden on March 12, 2026.

The merger of companies you mentioned was announced by Black Hills Energy and NorthWestern Energy in August 2025. This merger is subject to approval from the South Dakota Public Utilities Commission (for the South Dakota jurisdictions), per SDCL 49-34A-36. The commission has not yet issued a decision. You can review that docket at [GE25-001](#) - In the Matter of the Joint Application of NorthWestern Energy Public Service Corporation, Black Hills Corporation and NorthWestern Energy Group, Inc., for Approval of Merger.

You suggested that the PUC implement a competitive, deregulated retail energy market instead of the regulated, vertically integrated utility structure currently in existence in South Dakota. The state's utility regulatory framework is set through the legislative process, and anyone interested in changing state statutes should contact their local legislators. It is important to note that over time states that have adopted retail competition in the electricity market have not found the cost savings expected and in many cases are seeing higher retail prices than vertically integrated markets like South Dakota.

Your comments and this response will be posted in the "Comments and Responses" section of the docket. We appreciate your engagement and encourage you to follow the docket as it progresses.

*Chris Nelson, Chairman
Public Utilities Commission
Puc.sd.gov*