

To the Legislators of the Idaho Interim Committee on Energy, Environment, and Technology:

Thank you for your service to the state of Idaho and for the time that you have dedicated to shaping the energy framework in this state. I know that the current review of the Energy Plan is no simple task, and I appreciate your efforts.

I'm am writing to tell you that I don't feel that my interests and those of low-income and fixed-income Idahoans are being adequately represented at the Public Utilities Commission (PUC). Electric utilities and corporate entities have legal representation before the PUC when decisions are being made, and sometimes smaller community groups and non-profits are allowed a say, but the fact is that Idaho remains the only state in the West that doesn't have a Consumer Advocate to speak on behalf of residential customers when it comes to utility cases. The Idaho PUC has an excellent staff and highly experienced Commissioners, but it's all too easy to lose sight of the unique interests and concerns of the people paying their power bills at home, particularly those in the low-income community. Energy issues are complex, and it's hard for me and my neighbors to understand and get involved in energy policy and regulation, but we do care about our rates, about where our power comes from, and about how energy is distributed in our communities.

As an Idaho citizen and energy consumer, I'm urging you to create an Idaho Office of Consumer Advocate to represent residential utility customers in matters before the PUC. I'm also asking that you work with the PUC to give utilities the authority to offer within-class discriminatory rates for residential customers, providing the opportunity for residents to pay electric rates that better reflect their income levels. Low-income housing is often the least energy-efficient, so power bills are disproportionately high compared to those of higher-income customers, providing yet another argument for more aggressive low-income energy efficiency programs.

Finally, I'm asking that you please extend the comment period for the review of this new draft of the Idaho Energy Plan. One week's notice on the Legislature website is not an adequate time frame for all members of the public to read and respond to the contents of this elaborate document.

Thank you for your time, and I look forward to reading your reply.

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