



CITIZENS UTILITY BOARD

Fighting for Illinois Consumers

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CUB WARNING: BEWARE OF ELECTRIC RIP-OFFS

The Citizens Utility Board (CUB) on Tuesday warned consumers about electric rip-offs and scams, in the wake of a new state report that showed losses for Illinois customers of unregulated electricity suppliers have reached a new high, surpassing a half-a-billion dollars since 2015.

For the third consecutive year, Illinoisans have lost a significant amount of money with unregulated suppliers, compared with what they would have paid had they been with the regulated utility, Commonwealth Edison or Ameren Illinois, according to the annual report of the Illinois Commerce Commission's Office of Retail Market Development:

June 2015-May 2016: \$125.8 million loss
June 2016-May 2017: \$198 million loss
June 2017-May 2018: \$227.6 million loss
Total Losses: **\$551.4 million**

"This report is indicative of current electric market conditions," CUB Executive Director David Kolata said. "Here's the bottom line: It's likely that you will lose money with an alternative electricity supplier, and that is especially true for any company that knocks on your door, calls you on the phone, or mails you a pitch. This is why we think it's time the General Assembly implements reforms in the market."

So far this year, the General Assembly has failed to pass reforms supported by consumer advocates. For example, Amendment 4 to Senate Bill 1531 would, among other things, require unregulated electric and gas suppliers to notify customers when their rates rise, and prohibit automatic renewal of contracts if the terms change.

Shoppers evaluating an alternative supplier offer should follow these tips:

* Don't give out your electric bill or account number unless you are sure you want to switch. An unethical marketer could use that information to switch you to an alternative supplier without your consent.

* Ask if the rate you are being offered is an introductory or promotional rate. If so, ask when that rate ends and what the new rate will be.

* Ask if the rate you are being offered has any fees tied to it—such as a monthly fee that will inflate the per-kilowatt-hour rate, or an exit fee. Exit fees are capped at \$50. You can avoid getting slapped with an exit fee if you cancel a contract within 10 days of the supplier's charges first appearing on your bill.

Visit **CUBHelpCenter.com** for money-saving tips on avoiding bad deals and practicing energy efficiency at home. "Energy efficiency is a more reliable way to save money than shopping for another supplier," Kolata said.

CUB is Illinois' leading nonprofit utility watchdog group. Created by the Illinois Legislature, CUB opened its doors in 1984 to represent the interests of residential and small-business utility customers. Since then, CUB has saved consumers more than \$20 billion by helping to block rate hikes and secure refunds. For more details, call CUB's Consumer Hotline at 1-800-669-5556 or visit CUB's award-winning website, www.CitizensUtilityBoard.org.

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