



**Illinois PIRG**

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*This release is available online [here](#)*

**RELEASE: Groups launch city-wide campaign to engage Chicagoans on Peoples Gas pipe replacement investigation**

*Campaign aims to submit over 5,000 public comments calling for program to cost less, better prioritize public safety*

**CHICAGO** – A coalition of consumer, environmental and environmental justice organizations gathered outside Peoples Gas headquarters today to announce an intensive grassroots campaign to educate and engage thousands of Chicagoans on the Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC) [investigation](#) into the troubled Peoples Gas pipe replacement program.

Illinois Public Interest Research Group (PIRG) is dispatching teams of canvassers into Chicago neighborhoods to have one-on-one, face-to-face conversations with over 3,000 Peoples Gas customers. AARP Illinois, CUB Illinois, and other groups will also be engaging their members and the public. Through this activity the groups plan to collect and submit over 5,000 public comments to the ICC investigation.

“Chicagoans have been forced to pay for the failing Peoples Gas pipe replacement program for too long,” **said Natale Plevinsky, Citizen Outreach Director for Illinois PIRG.** “It’s time to give Peoples Gas customers a voice, and that is what we will be doing through our grassroots campaign for safer, cleaner energy.”

The pipe replacement program, cost estimates for which have grown from \$1 billion to up to \$11 billion, was the primary driver of the record \$303 million Peoples Gas [rate hike](#) approved in

November 2023. The Peoples Gas parent company has also credited the program as a primary reason it made six consecutive years of record profits.

“On behalf of AARP’s 250,000 members in Chicago and all older adults in the city, we continue to oppose Peoples Gas’ incessant requests for spending increases that directly benefit their bottom line, while placing an undue financial burden on customers,” **said Al Hollenbeck, State President of AARP Illinois**. “At a time when the rising cost of living has forced older adults to miss doctor’s appointments, skip prescriptions and struggle to afford basic necessities, Peoples Gas is asking them to give more toward a program that is already vastly over budget and behind schedule.”

As part of the November rate decision, utility regulators at the ICC paused the pipe replacement program and launched a formal investigation into the program, expected to conclude in January 2025.

"Peoples Gas is bankrupting customers, and we hope to give Chicagoans a voice to urge state regulators to rein in reckless Peoples Gas spending and hold the utility accountable," **said CUB Communications Director Jim Chilsen**. "We need to tell Peoples Gas and all utilities in the state: Stop treating customers like a money machine."

Despite already having spent billions of dollars on the program, a 2020 [study](#) found pipeline failure rates are not decreasing. Expert witness testimony [filed in June](#) detailed multiple fundamental flaws in Peoples Gas’ pipe safety approach.

“As a young person, the problems we are inheriting can seem overwhelming. But I have seen the difference I can make by talking to people face-to-face and giving them the opportunity to get involved,” **said Damarian Miller, a canvasser in Illinois PIRG’s campaign office**. “Chicagoans are fed up with paying ever higher gas bills for a wasteful program designed to keep us hooked on fossil fuels that pollute our homes.”

Peoples Gas customers who want to make a comment on the investigation can do so through the Illinois PIRG website: <https://pirg.org/illinois/take-action/add-your-name-for-safer-cleaner-energy/>

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*Illinois PIRG is an advocate for the public interest. We speak out for the public and stand up to special interests on problems that affect the public’s health, safety and wellbeing.*