



Public Service Commission of Wisconsin

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PSC Looks for Public Comments on Milwaukee Low-Income Energy Assistance Pilot Program

MADISON – The Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSC) is looking for public input on a proposal from We Energies to start a new pilot program aimed at reducing the number of low-income customers who are behind in paying their utility bills.

We Energies is asking for PSC approval of the pilot program to address the trend they are seeing in increasing arrears and uncollectibles over the last three years due to increasing energy costs and a downswing in the economy. We Energies currently has \$28 million approved in rates attributed to bad debt expense.

Up to 3,000 Milwaukee County residents would be targeted for the pilot program which would run for three years. Under the pilot program participants would:

- Qualify if they have been disconnected for non-payment with an arrears balance and a monthly utility bill of \$65 or more per month.
- Pay a co-payment combined with existing funds from Wisconsin Home Energy Assistance (WHEAP), a federal low-income energy assistance program.
- Base their monthly utility payment on their energy usage, the number of people in the household and their income level.
- Receive guidance on conserving energy and taking responsibility for monthly utility bill payment.

Twenty-six other states provide income-based energy assistance programs aimed at increasing the number of low-income customers making regular monthly utility payments. As an example, the experience in the New Jersey program shows that 65% of their participants stay current on their utility bills with program assistance. Experience in the other programs show they can help lower the utilities' uncollectible accounts and the impact on other ratepayers, while allowing participants to take responsibility for meeting their monthly energy bill.

(MORE)

The PSC is reviewing the WEPCO proposal and is seeking public comments by **January 14, 2005**. Anyone interested in providing comments should include the docket number 05-GF-144 on their correspondence and send it to:

Secretary to the Commission
Public Service Commission of Wisconsin
P.O. Box 7854
Madison, WI 53707-7854

Letters can also be sent electronically through the Electronic Regulatory Filing System (ERF) on the PSC website at <http://psc.wi.gov>. Click on ERF System and select “How to File Electronically.”

More information on the application can also be found on the ERF system by selecting “Search Electronic Document Repository” and typing in the docket number 05-GF-144.

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