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Citizens Water rate case order & investigation: OUCC statement

The following statement on today's Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission (IURC) orders regarding Citizens Energy Group may be attributed to Indiana Utility Consumer Counselor David Stippler:

“While we are reviewing today's orders in the water rate case and the new investigation of Citizens, the Indiana Office of Utility Consumer Counselor (OUCC) is pleased that the Commission has taken action. Today's rate order takes important steps in addressing the utility's executive compensation, while reducing various line items regarding operating expenses.

“The rate order also requires Citizens to work with the OUCC, IURC and other parties in future cases to address savings from the 2011 acquisition of the city's water and sewer utilities, and to address ways in which the savings will affect future rates.

“In the Commission's newly opened investigation of Citizens' billing and customer service practices, the OUCC's legal and technical teams look forward to fully participating and engaging in a robust dialogue that leads to a meaningful outcome.”

In the rate case (IURC Cause No. 44306), the Commission today rejected Citizens Water's requested increase, granting an increase of approximately 9 percent instead. Citizens' original request would have raised annual water revenues by 14.7 percent (approximately \$25.3 million). The OUCC filed testimony during the case recommending limiting the increase to approximately 3 percent.

In the new investigation (IURC Cause No. 44462), a prehearing conference is scheduled for April 22, 2014. Prehearing conferences are primarily held for the purpose of setting a procedural schedule, including hearing dates and testimonial deadlines for utilities, the OUCC, and other parties that may intervene.

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The Indiana Office of Utility Consumer Counselor (OUCC) represents Indiana consumer interests before state and federal bodies that regulate utilities. As a state agency, the OUCC's mission is to represent all Indiana consumers to ensure quality, reliable utility services at the most reasonable prices possible through dedicated advocacy, consumer education, and creative problem solving.

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