



**For Immediate Release**

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News Media Contact:

Anthony Swinger, (317) 233-2747 or

[aswinger@oucc.IN.gov](mailto:aswinger@oucc.IN.gov)

## **Eastern Heights Water Rate Case: OUCC Invites Consumer Comments**

If you are an Eastern Heights Utilities, Inc. customer and would like to comment on the utility's pending water rate request, you have the chance to do so.

The Indiana Office of Utility Consumer Counselor (OUCC), the state agency representing consumer interests in cases before the Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission (IURC), is reviewing Eastern Heights' request and is scheduled to file testimony on Jan. 6, 2021.

While using its legal and technical resources to analyze the request, including examining the utility's books and operations, the OUCC is inviting written comments from customers through Dec. 30, 2020.

The utility's request, if approved, would raise the monthly residential water bill for a customer using 5,000 gallons from \$21.59 to \$28.62. In its filings, the utility states it is seeking the increase to cover higher operating and maintenance costs, and to pay for infrastructure upgrades including tank painting and cleaning, well cleanings and pump maintenance, and treatment plant and booster pump improvements, along with additional projects.

Current water rates for Eastern Heights received IURC approval in 2006. The not-for-profit utility based in Bloomfield, Ind. provides water to more than 6,900 customers in Greene, Daviess, Lawrence, Martin, Monroe, and Owen Counties.

The utility is seeking the rate increase through the IURC's Small Utility Filing Procedure, which is designed to reduce the time and expense involved with regulatory filings for utilities with fewer than 8,000 customers. Savings are gained by allowing utility staff to use standardized forms and forego a technical evidentiary hearing. This is designed to result in utilities needing less assistance from rate consultants or attorneys, leading to fewer expenses to be passed on to customers.

The OUCC uses the same standard to review a utility's operations and records whether it seeks a rate increase through the Small Utility Filing Procedure or a traditional case. Conducting its review on behalf of all utility consumers, the OUCC will present the results of its review through a report to the IURC, including formal testimony. The IURC's review is conducted on behalf of the public interest (a balancing of utility and customer interests); it is responsible for resolving any factual disputes that may arise and issuing a final order establishing new rates.

A settlement agreement is possible in any legal proceeding; such an agreement, if reached, would require IURC approval.

Consumers who wish to submit written comments for the case record may do so via the OUCC's website at [www.in.gov/oucc/2361.htm](http://www.in.gov/oucc/2361.htm), by email at [uccinfo@oucc.IN.gov](mailto:uccinfo@oucc.IN.gov), or by mail at:

Consumer Services Staff  
Indiana Office of Utility Consumer Counselor  
115 W. Washington St., Suite 1500 South  
Indianapolis, IN 46204

**(Continued)**

The OUCC needs to receive all written consumer comments no later than Dec. 30, 2020 so that it can: 1) Consider them in preparing its testimony and 2) File them with the Commission to be included in the case's formal evidentiary record. Comments should include the consumer's **name**, **mailing address**, and a reference to either "**IURC Cause No. 45435-U**" or Eastern Heights Utilities. Consumers with questions about submitting written comments can contact the OUCC's consumer services staff toll-free at 1-888-441-2494.

The OUCC is posting case updates online at [www.in.gov/oucc/2946.htm](http://www.in.gov/oucc/2946.htm). Updates are also available through the agency's monthly electronic newsletter. Consumers can subscribe at [www.in.gov/oucc/2877.htm](http://www.in.gov/oucc/2877.htm).

(IURC Cause No. 45435-U)

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.