

Is it efficient? Illinois groups accuse Ameren Illinois of "breaking their word"

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SPRINGFIELD - Members of the Illinois Clean Jobs Coalition and Elaine Nekritz (D-Northbrook) criticized Ameren Illinois Wednesday for setting new energy efficiency goals, which they say fall short of their targets.

During a telephone press conference Wednesday morning, Nekritz joined with David Kolata, director of the Citizens Utility Board, Josh Mogerman of the Natural Resources Defense Council and Reverend Cindy Shepherd, the Central Illinois outreach director of Faith in Place to denounce Ameren Illinois's appeal to the Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC) to reduce their efficiency goals by 27 percent by 2030. The group said Ameren already negotiated lower efficiency goals than ComEd, a power company from Northern Illinois.

In a release from Billy Weinberg of the Illinois Clean Jobs Coalition, Ameren Illinois agreed to achieve energy efficiency targets of the Future Energy Jobs Bill of 16 percent by 2030. Ameren Illinois recently filed a plan with the ICC, which would lower those targets by 27 percent while seeking a \$36 million bonus incentive, which it would receive by meeting the lower goals.

Those participating in the teleconference said Ameren Illinois's lack of meeting its original goals may reflect positively on its stakeholders, but negatively on its consumers.

"By denying the people of Central and Southern Illinois the economic benefits of the Future Energy Jobs Bill - while forcing them to pay more for electricity - Ameren is hurting the people of Central and Southern Illinois, especially our most vulnerable who can least afford it," Shepherd said.

Nekritz, who helped pass that Future Energy Jobs Bill warned Ameren Illinois's appeal to the ICC, if it is approved, will hurt the overall economy and health of the state.

"A core belief in passing this legislation was that the benefits of clean energy - new jobs, lower electric bills, improved health - should be shared throughout Illinois," she said. "The gains from renewable energy and energy efficiency, members agreed, should not be limited to one region of the state."

Kolata shared those concerns.

"It's fundamentally unfair that customers in one part of the state won't save as much money as Chicago customers simply because Ameren refuses to abide by standards set forth in the new energy law," he said. "Ameren proposes to spend 44 percent more than ComEd for each kilowatt-hour of energy saved. That is unacceptable, and it clearly shows the company is denying its customers the full benefits of the Future Energy Jobs Act."

Mogerman said the Future Energy Jobs Act will also bolster the Illinois economy, assuming power companies operate within the parameters of the new law.

"Energy efficiency could be packing 7,000 jobs and \$700 million into the Illinois economy under the state's new energy rules, but that can't happen if Ameren gives up on its targets before they even start to try," he said.

Some aspects of energy efficiency which Ameren Illinois can assist its customers include rebates for higher efficiency appliances as well as assistance in weatherizing homes. Mogerman said he is reminded of how much more efficiently Downstate Illinois

can run each time he visits his family in Springfield and sees their old refrigerator constantly running (and therefore using unneeded energy) in the garage.

Ameren, however, disagrees with the assessment of that group. In a release, Ameren Illinois said its energy efficiency program is among the most effective in the country. It claimed it is ranked in the top 15 nationally by a leading energy efficiency organization.

"We have consistently achieved our performance objectives in the nine years we have managed energy efficiency programs in Illinois, helping customers reduce their energy usage by nearly 12 million megawatt-hours and save \$781 million," Chairman and President of Ameren Illinois Richard J. Mark said in a release.

Under its plan, Ameren Illinois said it intends to spend the maximum amount allowed under the law - \$112 million per year - for the next four years, adding it is focusing on moderate-to-low income customers, who pay for energy efficiency programs every month and therefore deserve the opportunity to receive the benefits.

"Chris Neme from the testified that we should focus on businesses because serving residents is too expensive," Mark said in a release. "We could not disagree more. It's our obligation to ensure that the working families of Central and Southern Illinois receive real and meaningful savings from the programs they are paying for. That is the fundamental goal of our plan and we will not apologize for it."

Ameren Illinois accuses groups working against it of blocking investments into the communities, and called them hypocritical.

Here are a list of "supporting facts" Ameren Illinois included in its release.

- Their statement that we have not committed to achieving energy efficiency targets of 13 percent by 2025 and 16 percent by 2030 is false. This filing is only for the next four year period.
- Their statement that our plan will cost downstate jobs is also untrue. The Ameren Illinois plan will drive the creation of local jobs, invest in local communities and catalyze the development of new locally-owned small business enterprises that will be equipped to deliver energy efficiency services to all Ameren Illinois customers.
- Our plan would invest over \$11 million over the next four years developing a diverse workforce and investing in the communities for our customers; that includes efforts to develop small and local businesses that can provide services in the energy efficiency space.

- They state that Ameren Illinois is seeking a \$36 million bonus if we achieve lower goals. This is a false statement. In the unlikely event that Ameren Illinois earned the "maximum bonus," it would amount to approximately \$1.3 million in the first year of the plan and \$10.1 million in total during the four year plan.
- The differences between the Ameren Illinois and ComEd plans can best be summed up by the differences in our territories. ComEd serves 3.8 million customers within a territory spanning only 11,400 square miles, or 333 customers per square mile. Ameren Illinois serves 1.2 million electric customers in a service territory that covers 43,700 square miles, or 27.5 customers per square mile. There is significantly less energy saving potential in the Ameren Illinois service territory.