



## ULSTER COUNTY LEGISLATIVE NEWS

### ULSTER COUNTY NEWS INFORMATION

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### For Immediate Release

October 11, 2023

### Ulster County Legislature Unanimously Calls on Public Service Commission to Deny Central Hudson Rate Hike

(Kingston, NY) – The Ulster County Legislature unanimously opposes the proposed rate hike requested by Fortis/Central Hudson, and encourages Ulster County ratepayers to submit public comment requesting that the increase be denied by the Public Service Commission. The company is asking the Public Service Commission to approve at 16% increase for electric bills and 19% for gas beginning in July 2024, despite thousands of customers currently being in arrears and many more still experiencing significant billing issues since June 2021.

“In the last two years we have heard from countless constituents about erratic billing and unexplained overcharges related to their Central Hudson accounts, with the uniform complaint that the company has been apathetic to the consequences of their actions and been slow to fix these longstanding issues. It is not right for Central Hudson to be asking for a rate increase until their billing issues are rectified,” **said Majority Leader Jonathan Heppner (District 23 – Woodstock & Hurley).**

“Ulster County residents are still reeling from the aftermath of Central Hudson’s systemic billing system failures, enduring the nightmare of addressing inflated and inaccurate bills, as well as substantial withdrawals from their savings accounts. It is entirely unjust for this utility to respond to their negligence and inadequate system testing by burdening customers even further. It is imperative that Central Hudson addresses all outstanding issues resulting from the failed implementation of its now two year old billing system and makes every customer whole before any rate hike is even considered by the Public Service Commission,” **said Chair Tracey Bartels (District 16 Gardiner & Shawangunk).**

Enclosed is copy of the Legislature’s comment. Public Comment can be submitted online [here](#), and in-person at the public hearing on **Wednesday October 18, 2023 at 6:00PM in the Restorative Justice & Community Empowerment Center located at 733 Broadway, Kingston 12401.**

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# ULSTER COUNTY LEGISLATURE



TRACEY BARTELS

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*Clerk 845-340-3666*

October 3, 2023

Hon. Rory Christian, Commissioner  
New York State Public Service Commission  
Empire State Plaza  
Agency Building 3  
Albany, New York 12223

**RE: CASES 23-E-0418 and 23-G-0419**

Dear Commissioner Christian:

We write to express our opposition to the proposed rate increase requested by Fortis/Central Hudson, which would amount to a 16% increase on electric bills and a 19% increase on gas services in the upcoming year.

Since June 2021, we have heard from constituents who received estimated bills amounting to triple or greater their ordinary usage, months of incorrect meter readings, threats of shut offs for incoherent bills, and automatic withdrawals of thousands of dollars from customer bank accounts, all while this utility provider did little to address the internally caused problems, refund customers who mistakenly paid, or provide a transparent path towards correcting this large-scale billing issue. In response to customer complaints and advocacy from this body and other elected officials, the Public Service Commission announced in March 2022 that it had opened an investigation into these predatory and negligent practices. Released in December 2022, the report released by the investigation found that Fortis/Central Hudson knew these issues were apparent and failed to address them, stating:

“System transition problems were foreseeable and avoidable, yet negligent and reckless actions on the part of decision makers lead to a disastrous outcome for many Central Hudson customers. While Central Hudson has described the problems as “hiccups within the system,” such a characterization minimizes the real pain some customers have experienced and trivializes the failures to identify and address numerous problems, in addition to failures to address known issues in advance of the go-live date. The problems Central Hudson experienced were not merely fleeting minor issues associated with system stabilization. They were significant and long-lasting -- and the direct result of a lack of preparation, testing, training, staffing, communication, and candor.”

Due to the negligence of Fortis/Central Hudson and its inaction in rectifying customer bills for the last two years, we feel it is inappropriate to raise rates at this time. Accordingly, we respectfully request that the Commission deny the rate increase for both gas and electric accounts. Please do not hesitate to contact our office should you have any questions or require additional information.

Sincerely,



Majority Leader Jonathan Heppner



Chair Tracey Bartels



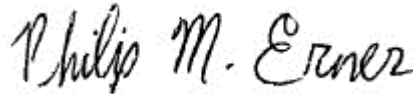
Minority Leader Kenneth Ronk, Jr.



Deputy Majority Leader Abe Uchitelle



Deputy Minority Leader Craig Lopez



Legislator Phil Erner



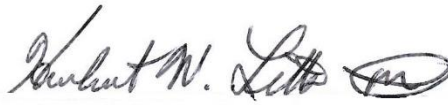
Legislator Gina Hansut



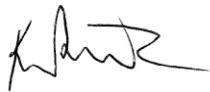
Legislator Thomas Corcoran



Legislator Dean Fabiano



Legislator Herbert Litts, III



Legislator Kevin Roberts



Legislator Mann Jo Greene



Legislator Peter Criswell



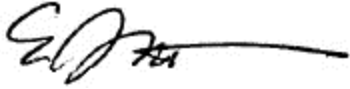
Legislator John Gavaris



Legislator Megan Sperry



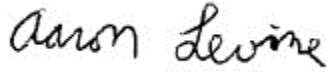
Legislator Brian Cahill



Legislator Eric Stewart



Legislator Kathy Nolan



Legislator Aaron Levine



Legislator Joe Maloney



Legislator Chris Hewitt



Legislator Tricia Bowen



Legislator Laura Petit