2009.01,29 15:05:04 Kansas Corporation Commission /S/ Su**STATEKORPORATION** COMMISSION

# THE STATE CORPORATION COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF KANSAS

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Before Commissioners:

Thomas E. Wright, Chairman

Michael C. Moffet Joseph F. Harkins

In the Matter of a General Investigation Into	)	
the Commission's Consideration of the	)	
Public Utility Regulatory Policy Act's	)	Docket No. 09-GIME-360-GIE
Electric Standards as Implemented in the	)	
Energy Independence and Security Act of	)	
2007.	)	

## COMMENTS OF THE CITIZENS' UTILITY RATEPAYER BOARD

The Citizens' Utility Ratepayer Board (CURB) files the following comments pursuant to the Kansas Corporation Commission (Commission) Order of December 16, 2008, in the above-captioned docket:

## **I. General Comments**

1. As a general statement, CURB supports energy conservation and efficiency efforts and believes the Commission has embraced and encouraged energy efficiency efforts in Kansas.

Further, CURB believes that orders made by the Commission in Docket Nos. 08-GIMX-441-GIV and 08-GIMX-442-GIV ("441" and "442"), are in compliance with the three stated purposes of PURPA Title I, which are to (1) promote conservation of energy by utility customers, (2) encourage optimal efficiency of electric utility facilities and resources, and (3) to require equitable rates for electric customers.

## **II. Specific Comments**

2. The following additional comments are offered to certain of the Commission questions:

Question I A. With regard to each of the standards cited above, does federal law permit prior state action for compliance?

Response: If this question is asking whether prior actions of the Commission may satisfy the requirements of PURPA, CURB believes they may, so long as they furthered the purposes of the most current version of the Act, set forth procedures and policies for implementation of the stated goals of the Act, and do not explicitly contradict its requirements or impede its purposes. While the Act grants broad discretion to the Commission in implementation of its requirements, it appears to require that the Commission support its decision not to take action. The Commission may justifiably decline to act by explaining that it has already addressed the standards and complied with the requirements in a prior proceeding, and provide evidence that the prior proceeding meets all relevant requirements of the Act or substantially furthers its stated purposes.

Question I B. If federal law permits prior state action to constitute compliance for a standard, have Commission considerations and decisions in any prior docket or dockets been sufficient to meet the grandfathering requirements to constitute compliance for any such standard such that the requirement to consider the standard is waived?

**Response:** CURB believes, with the exception of the standards concerning the consideration of smart grid investments, the Commission has substantially complied with the requirements of the Act. Staff has identified the relevant dockets. Furthermore, a liberal interpretation of the Act's grant of broad discretion to the Commission in complying with the Act

might permit the Commission to consider itself within compliance of this section, as well. The parties in 441 or 442? were free to raise concerns about smart grid investments, and no one did. The Commission might reasonably decline to set forth standards at this time on the basis that the stakeholders in Kansas had an opportunity to ask the Commission to consider smart grid investments, but expressed more concerns about traditional grid investments, as evidenced by legislative proposals, KETA activities and several ongoing dockets at the KCC. By establishing a procedure to review this decision at an appropriate interval, the KCC will have made a reasonable decision that is supported by current circumstances in Kansas. However, a narrower interpretation of the Act would call for the Commission to open a docket to specifically consider smart grid investments.

Question II A. With regard to the two standards pertaining to smart grids:

(1) Do utilities limit the amount of smart grid investments due to concerns investments may not be completely recovered? —

**Response:** No. CURB can find no evidence in past Commission decisions that denied a utility cost recovery for prudently-incurred capital investments. In fact, there is no evidence whatsoever that public utility commissions are unwilling to permit utilities to recover their reasonable and prudent investments in technology that is necessary to serve their customers or that improves the quality of service in ways that justify the expenditure. If the utilities are not making investments in "smart grid" technologies, the primary reason is that there is no consensus as yet as to what a "smart grid" is and what it will do.

Additionally, utilities are no doubt aware that making a commitment to converting the

current grid to a "smart" grid is a massive and incredibly expensive undertaking that may not be qualify as a reasonable and prudent investment that is necessary to provide safe and reliable service. It is also likely that utilities recognize that forcing their customers to pay for a smart grid AND absorb the loss of their investment in the current transmission system would place an economic burden on customers that they can't possibly bear without undue hardship, even if the utilities are confident that their request for full recovery would be approved.

(2) Are there procedures already in place that address the possibility of replacing existing long-lived technology due to obsolescence? If so, what impact will smart grid investments have on these procedures?

**Response:** As previously stated, CURB does not find that any previous Commission decision would discourage utilities from making sensible improvements. In reality, utilities address the problem of obsolescence of technology on an on-going basis: computers are upgraded, transmission lines replaced with higher-grade materials, generation equipment is retrofitted with improved components, environmental remediation equipment is replaced or modified, etc. The costs of such improvements are routinely recovered from ratepayers.

However, the massive overhaul of the nation's transmission system, if accomplished, will of necessity be initiated and accomplished through the exercise of Congressional will. It makes no sense to build the "smart grid" (whatever that turns out to be) from the bottom up, utility-by-utility: that's what made our national grid such an inefficient patchwork quilt of poorly-connected systems in the first place. Just as the construction of a comprehensive interstate highway system required Congressional action and massive commitment of federal dollars, the rebuilding of our nation's transmission system will, too.

Until there is a national consensus on the necessity of rebuilding the grid and a national plan for how it should be accomplished (and financed), it makes no sense whatsoever for a utility to invest now in smart grid technologies that soon may be rendered obsolete by that plan. The states and their utility commissions will no doubt be involved in implementing the national plan on a local level, but CURB sees no reason for concern that current regulatory regimes cannot be utilized or adapted for that purpose.

Question III A. Parties are requested to provide comments as to what precise issues with regard to each standard should be addressed in this investigation, preliminary comments as to what Commission action should be undertaken on each standard, and any additional preliminary comments they believe will assist the Commission in consideration of these standards.

**Response:** CURB believes that the orders set forth by the Commission in the 441 and 442 dockets adequately address the standards set forth in EISA Section 532, therefore requiring no further Commission action.

CURB recognizes that the Commission has not explicitly addressed the Smart Grid standards as set forth in EISA Section 1307. However, during the 441 and 442 workshops and collaborative sessions, utilities and other intervening parties were given an opportunity to discuss various energy conservation and efficiency technologies. If Smart Grid technology, including the use of "smart meters", is necessary to encourage energy conservation and efficiency in Kansas, it would have been discussed in a previous session.

Question III B. What prior Commission decisions or Kansas legislation should be considered

with regard to each standard in this proceeding? Do any of these decisions, or any prior legislation, constitute adoption or implementation of a comparable standard or portion of a standard?

**Response:** As previously mentioned, CURB believes that the proceedings and orders issued in the 441 and 442 dockets are adequate to meet the standards as required by PURPA Title I.

Question III C. Parties should also comment on what procedure they believe would be most useful to address the issues.

**Response:** As previously stated, CURB believes prior Commission action is adequate to meet the standards as required by the EISA and PURPA Title I. However, if the Commission elects to investigate one or more topics as described by PURPA, conducting workshops and collaborative sessions is the best way to address the issues.

Respectfully submitted,

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## **VERIFICATION**

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	)	ss:
COUNTY OF SHAWNEE	)	

I, Niki Christopher, of lawful age, being first duly sworn upon her oath states:

That she is an attorney for the above named petitioner; that she has read the above and foregoing Intervention, and, upon information and belief, states that the matters therein appearing are true and correct.

Niki Christopher

SUBSCRIBED AND SWORN to before me this 29th day of January, 2009.

DELLA J. SMITH

Notary Public - State of Kansas

My Appt. Expires January 26, 2013

Notary of Public

My Commission expires: 1-26-2013.

09-GIME-360-GIE

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