BEFORE THE STATE CORPORATION COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF KANSAS

In the Matter of a General Investigation)
Regarding the Effect of Federal Income)
Fax Reform on the Revenue Requirements)
Of Kansas Public Utilities and Request to) Docket No. 18-GIMX-248-GIV
Issue an Accounting Authority Order)
Requiring Certain Regulated Public)
Utilities to Defer Effects of Tax Reform)
to a Deferred Revenue Account)

STAFF TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF

BLACK HILLS' SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT

PREPARED BY

ANDRIA N. JACKSON

UTILITIES DIVISION

KANSAS CORPORATION COMMISSION

March 9, 2018

1 Q. Please state your name and business address. 2 A. My name is Andria N. Jackson and my business address is 1500 Southwest 3 Arrowhead Road, Topeka, Kansas, 66604. 4 5 Q. Are you the same Andria Jackson that contributed to the Report and 6 Recommendation in this Docket on December 14, 2017? 7 A. Yes. 8 9 Q. What is the purpose of your testimony? 10 A. I am testifying on behalf of the Staff of the Kansas Corporation Commission 11 (Staff and Commission, respectively) in support of the settlement of the issues 12 outlined in the Settlement Agreement (Agreement) between Black Hills/Kansas 13 Gas Utility Company, LLC, d/b/a Black Hills Energy (Black Hills), Staff, and the 14 Citizens' Utility Ratepayer Board (CURB) (collectively, the Parties).¹ 15 My testimony will explain why the Commission should approve the 16 Agreement because it is in the public interest. Specifically, I will: 17 Provide background information about this docket; 18 Provide an overview and discussion of the Agreement; 19 Discuss the standard of review used to guide the Commission in its consideration of whether to accept the Agreement²; and 20 21 Discuss the evidence in the record that supports the Agreement.

¹ Joint Motion for Approval of Black Hills' Tax Reform Plan, Docket No. 18-GIMX-248-GIV (Mar. 7, 2018).

² Order Approving Contest Settlement Agreement, Docket No. 08-ATMG-280-RTS, pp. 4-6 (May 12, 2008).

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2 **Background Information** 3 O. Please provide a brief background of this docket. 4 A. The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA) is a Congressional bill that amends the 5 Internal Revenue Code to reduce tax rates and modify policies, credits, and 6 deductions for individuals and businesses. The bill was initially passed in the 7 House of Representatives on November 16, 2017, and on December 2, 2017, the 8 Senate passed its version of the bill. While the House and Senate bills were in 9 reconciliation conference meetings, it became widely anticipated that tax reform 10 would be signed by the President before the first of the upcoming year. 11 Therefore, in anticipation of the TCJA being signed into law, on December 12 14, 2017, Staff filed a Motion to Open a General Investigation and Issue 13 Accounting Authority Order Regarding Federal Tax Reform (Staff's Motion). 14 Attached to Staff's Motion was a Report and Recommendation recommending the 15 Commission issue an Order addressing the following: 16 1) Opening a general investigation for the purposes of examining the 17 financial impact of anticipated federal income tax reform on regulated 18 public utilities operating in Kansas; 19 2) Requiring, through the use of an Accounting Authority Order (AAO), 20 certain regulated public utilities that are taxed at the corporate level to 21 track and accumulate in a deferred revenue account, with interest

compounded monthly at the most current Commission-approved customer

deposit interest rate, the reduction in their regulated cost of service that

would occur in the event that a new lower federal income tax rate is signed into law. These deferrals should take effect at the same time as the new federal corporate tax rate change and the calculations should be performed using the cost of service data that were used to set the utilities' last Commission-approved revenue requirement; and 3) Confirming that the Commission's intention regarding the AAO is to preserve any potential tax benefits so that they may be evaluated in the context of a comprehensive evaluation of the reasonableness of the utilities' rates as well as notifying utilities that this portion of their rates should be considered interim subject to refund until the Commission has the opportunity to review the reasonableness of the utilities' rates on a comprehensive and case-by-case basis and confirming that the Commission intends to capture the reduction in Accumulated Deferred Income Tax (ADIT) balances that will occur in the event that a lower corporate federal income tax rate takes effect, over time, in a manner that comports with Internal Revenue Services (IRS) Tax Normalization Rules. On December 22, 2017, the TCJA was signed into law, which, amongst other changes, reduced the federal corporate income tax rate from 35% to 21% beginning on January 1, 2018.³ Also, on December 22, 2017, CURB filed a Petition to Intervene and a Response in Support of Staff's Motion.

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³ Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, Public Law No. 115-97; Statute 131 Stat. 2054 (Dec. 22, 2017).

On January 18, 2018, the Commission issued its Order Opening General Investigation and Issuing Accounting Authority Order Regarding Federal Tax Reform. On January 31, 2018, Black Hills filed its entry of appearance in this docket. On February 21, 2018, the Parties met in Topeka to discuss and attempt to reach an agreement to quantify the financial impacts of the new lower tax rate on Black Hills' Kansas-based operations based upon the instructions provided by the Commission in its Order and how the cost savings related to the lower tax rates should be passed on to its Kansas customers. As a result of the meeting and follow-up discussions, the Parties were able to reach an agreement. **Terms of the Settlement Agreement** Q. Please discuss in detail the provisions of the Agreement. A. The provisions of the Agreement are as follows: The annual cost of service savings to customers relating to the reduction in federal income tax expense included in Black Hills' cost of service is \$1,718,203, exclusive of interest. This amount is also exclusive of the cost savings relating to Black Hills' Gas Service Reliability Surcharge (GSRS) and of any cost savings relating to capturing excess ADIT for the benefit of customers consistent with tax normalization requirements. The Parties agree that Black Hills shall refund \$1,719,619, which includes interest on the amount of monthly excessive collections in the deferred revenue account for the months of January, February and March 2018.

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Black Hills will refund 53% of the tax savings by providing customers an annual one-time separate line-item bill credit in April 2018, and also a volumetric credit will be returned to customers through its purchased gas adjustment (PGA) for the remaining 47% of the tax savings. The one-time bill credit and volumetric credit to the PGA will be provided to customers in January of each succeeding year following 2018 until Black Hills' next rate case. Additionally, the Parties agree that the tax savings should be allocated among Black Hills' customer classes based upon the total base revenue allocation approved by the Commission in its last rate case.

- Black Hills will refund an additional \$154,331 in tax savings to customers relating to its GSRS surcharge. A one-time credit to the GSRS (with interest) will be applied in April 2018 per customer by class for the January, February and March 2018 billing cycles; additionally, there will be a permanent reduction in the monthly GSRS surcharge to reflect the tax savings.
- Black Hills will establish a regulatory liability to account for and capture tax savings relating to excess ADIT. Any issues regarding the amount of tax savings relating to excess ADIT and how those savings should be passed on to customers will be deferred to Black Hills' next general rate case filing. Black Hills' excess ADIT as of December 31, 2017, will not

⁴ The allocations of 53% and 47% between fixed bill credit and volumetric PGA credit, respectively, are consistent with the percentage allocations in Black Hills' last rate case for the amount of total nongas or non-PGA costs recovered through the monthly customer charge and the amount of total costs recovered through the commodity charge.

1 be amortized until the excess ADIT is reflected in base rates approved by 2 the Commission in its next rate case filing. 3 The terms in the Agreement are only applicable to Black Hills' tax refund 4 plan and shall not be binding on Staff, CURB or the Commission in 5 reviewing or approving any TCJA tax refund plan submitted by any other 6 public utility. 7 The calculations set forth in the appendices of the Agreement are based 8 upon the Commission issuing an order approving the Agreement by no 9 later than March 27, 2018, to allow Black Hills time to prepare April bills 10 to reflect the credits relating to the tax savings. 11 12 The Commission's Standard of Review for Settlement Agreements 13 O. Has the Commission previously used factors or standards to review a 14 settlement agreement? 15 A. Yes. The Commission's Order in Docket No. 08-ATMG-280-RTS (08-280 16 Docket) discusses five factors, or standards, and multiple agreements have been reviewed by the Commission using the five factors since that Order.⁵ These five 17 18 standards are as follows: 19 1. Whether there was an opportunity for the opposing party to be heard on 20 their reasons for opposition to the Agreement; 21 2. Whether the Agreement is supported by substantial competent evidence in 22 the record as a whole;

⁵ Order Approving Contested Settlement Agreement, 08-280 Docket, p. 5 (May 12, 2008).

1	3. Whether the Agreement conforms to applicable law;
2	4. Whether the Agreement results in just and reasonable rates; and
3	5. Whether the results of the Agreement are in the public interest.
4	Each of these five factors is discussed individually below.
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6	Support for the Settlement Agreement
7	Q. Please address whether each party had an opportunity to be heard on its
8	reasons for opposing the Agreement.
9	A. The Agreement presented to the Commission is a unanimous agreement, as the
10	Parties either support or do not oppose approval of the Agreement. All parties
11	having an interest in Black Hills' tax savings plan participated in settlement
12	discussion on February 21, 2018, and were able to reach a settlement of all issues.
13	Therefore, this factor has been met as each party has been represented, has had an
14	opportunity to be heard, and agree to the terms of the Agreement.
15	It should be noted that the Agreement limits its applicability to only Black
16	Hills and is not binding or precedential to the tax savings refund plans submitted
17	by other utilities. Furthermore, should any other party wish to be heard, it can file
18	a response to the Joint Motion.
19	
20	Q. Please address whether the Agreement is supported by substantial competent
21	evidence in the record as a whole.
22	A. The Agreement is supported by substantial competent evidence in the record as a
23	whole. The record as a whole includes Black Hills' Application and direct

1 testimony, Staff and CURB direct testimony, rebuttal testimony and a 2 Commission Order filed in support of the settlement amount resulting from Black 3 Hills' last rate case, Docket No. 14-BHCG-502-RTS (14-502 Docket), which the 4 Parties agree is the basis of the recalculation of the revenue requirement in this 5 case. Additionally, the Parties intend to submit pre-filed testimony in support of 6 this Agreement. These past and present filed positions constitute the body of 7 evidence that the Commission would rely on to make a determination of the 8 issues presented if this were to go to a fully litigated evidentiary hearing. It is 9 Staff's position that the terms of this Agreement complies with all the instructions 10 set forth in the Order issued by the Commission in this docket, is based on the 11 record as a whole, and are commensurate with what could be expected if the case 12 were to be fully litigated. 13 14 Q. How was the annual cost of service savings to customers in the amount of 15 \$1,718,203 arrived at by the Parties? 16 A. Black Hills and Staff quantified the impact of the new lower tax rates by taking 17 the difference between the cost of service approved by the Commission in the 14-18 502 Docket and the cost of service that would have resulted had the provision for 19 federal income taxes been based upon the corporate income tax rate approved in 20 the TCJA. The result of that calculation, as presented in Appendix 1 attached to 21 the Agreement, resulted in an annual cost of service savings to customers in the 22 amount of \$1,718,203. Both parties performed its own analysis using the same 23 methodology of incorporating the change in income tax rate to the settlement

1 amount in its own financial schedules. The difference in the revenue requirement 2 recalculations presented by the parties in settlement discussion was immaterial. 3 4 Q. Please address whether the Agreement conforms to applicable law. 5 A. I am not an attorney. However, it is my understanding that the Agreement does 6 follow precedent for similar settlements in the past that have been executed in an 7 effort to conform to applicable laws. All attempts were made to ensure that this 8 Agreement conforms to applicable laws and is presented in a fashion to allow the 9 Commission to properly approve the Agreement. 10 11 Q. Does the Agreement result in just and reasonable rates? 12 A. Yes. This Agreement results in rates that fall within the "zone of reasonableness" 13 described by the Kansas courts in which the result is balanced between the 14 interests of investors versus ratepayers, present versus future ratepayers, and is in 15 the public interest generally. The agreed-upon tax savings refund plan is based 16 upon the Commission-approved rates in the 14-502 Docket, which at the time of 17 approval were just and reasonable as it resulted in the proper balance between the

rates as low as possible for customers, while providing reliable gas service.

However, with the passing of the TCJA, a subsequent revision to the

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Commission-approved rates must be made to reflect the lower tax rate in order to

Company's desire to have a reasonable assurance that it would earn sufficient

revenues and cash flows to meet its financial obligations and the need to keep

ensure the rates continue to be just and reasonable as was intended by the

Commission Order in the 14-502 Docket. Black Hills' agreement to pass the savings resulting from the TCJA immediately on to customers contributes to their rates continuing to be just and reasonable. Q. Why is it reasonable to defer a decision on amortization of the excess deferred taxes to the next rate case? A. As part of the Agreement, the Parties agree to defer any issues regarding the amount of tax savings related to excess ADIT to Black Hills' next rate case. Until such time, Black Hills will establish a regulatory liability to account for and capture the tax savings related to the excess deferred taxes. This regulatory liability will not be amortized until the next base rate case. This approach is reasonable because it ensures that customers will continue to realize the benefit associated with the excess deferred taxes as an offset to rate base. If ADIT is reduced, rate base will increase reflecting less of an ADIT rate base offset (lower cost free capital). Therefore, until the excess deferred taxes are reflected in Black Hills' next rate case, customers will continue to receive the time value of money associated with the excess deferred taxes today because they serve as an offset to rate base. Black Hills also intends to capture the tax savings relating to excess ADIT for the benefit of customers using a methodology that is consistent with the tax normalization requirements specified by IRS normalization rules. Calculating the amortization of excess deferred taxes in a fashion that does not cause an IRS

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normalization violation is a complicated and data intensive process. It is

1		reasonable to perform this calculation in the context of a comprehensive rate
2		review so as to not risk calculating the amortization incorrectly and inadvertently
3		causing an IRS normalization violation.
4		
5	Q.	What are the consequences of a violation of the normalization rules?
6	A.	The effect of the normalization requirements is to provide utility customers with
7		the benefit of cost free capital made possible by using accelerated tax
8		depreciation. Violating the normalization requirements can result in the loss of
9		the ability to claim accelerated depreciation on public utility property in the
10		future, which has a real cost to both the utility and its customers. It should be
11		avoided at all costs.
12		
13	Q.	Are you aware of the balancing test set forth by the Kansas Supreme Court
14		for determining whether rates are "just and reasonable"?
15	A.	Yes, the Kansas Supreme Court has stated:
16 17 18 19 20 21		The leading cases in this area clearly indicate that the goal should be a rate fixed within the "zone of reasonableness" after the application of a balancing test in which the interests of all concerned parties are considered. In rate-making cases, the parties whose interests must be considered and balanced are these: (1) the utility's investors vs. the ratepayers; (2) the present ratepayers vs. the future ratepayers; and (3) the public interest. ⁶
23	Q.	What evidence in this case should be considered when performing the
24		balancing test set forth by the Kansas Supreme Court?

⁶ Kan. Gas and Electric Co. v. State Corp Comm'n, 239 Kan. 483, 488 (1986).

A. Staff's contention is the Agreement before the Commission comfortably passes the balancing test set forth by the Kansas Supreme Court. The following supports this assertion: (1) the agreed-upon tax savings balances the interests of the utility's investors and the ratepayers because it appropriately takes into account the reduction in federal income tax expense included in Black Hills' current cost of service as a result of the TCJA and passes those cost saving to Black Hills' customers in a timely manner; (2) Staff is not aware of any intergenerational inequities in this Agreement, and therefore the Agreement provides a fair balance between present and future ratepayers; and (3) the fact that both of the two factors above have been met is itself an indication that the Agreement is in the public interest generally. I will discuss this in greater detail below. Q. Does Staff believe the results of the Agreement are in the public interest? A. Yes. There were multiple interests represented by the Parties involved in the Agreement, with CURB representing the interests of residential and small general service ratepayers, Black Hills representing the interest of its management and shareholders, and Staff attempting to balance each of those interests while representing the interests of the public generally. The fact that these varied interests were able to collaborate and present a unanimous resolution of the issues discussed in this case strongly indicates the public interest standard has been met. Generally speaking, the public interest is served when ratepayers are protected from unnecessarily high prices, discriminatory prices and/or unreliable service.

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1	More specifically, it is Staff's opinion that the Agreement meets the public
2	interest because:
3	• It is in the public interest to pass back savings to customers as soon as
4	possible and this Agreement accomplishes that;
5	• Each of the Parties represented their respective interests by putting time,
6	thought, and analysis into deriving a tax savings settlement position it
7	found reasonable;
8	• The tax savings was calculated and confirmed independently by each
9	Party based on the evidence in the record in the 14-502 Docket; and
10	• If this Agreement is approved, the Parties would avoid the costly and
11	time-consuming process of a fully-litigated hearing. It is in the public
12	interest to avoid these costs if possible and this Agreement accomplishes
13	this result.
14	
15	Q. Should the Commission accept the Agreement as a reasonable resolution of
16	the issues in this docket?
17	A. Yes, the Agreement represents a reasonable resolution of the issues in this docket
18	will result in just and reasonable rates, is in the public interest, is supported by
19	substantial competent evidence in the record, and falls within the realm of
20	reasonable debate and the zone of reasonableness.
21	
22	Q. Does this conclude your testimony?
23	A. Yes, thank you.

STATE OF KANSAS)
) ss.
COUNTY OF SHAWNEE)

VERIFICATION

Andria N. Jackson, being duly sworn upon her oath deposes and states that she is Managing Auditor in the Utilities Division for the State Corporation Commission of the State of Kansas, that she has read and is familiar with the foregoing *Staff Testimony in Support of Black Hills' Settlement Agreement* and that the statements contained therein are true and correct to the best of her knowledge, information and belief.

Andria N. Jackson, Managing Auditor Kansas Corporation Commission of the State of Kansas

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 9th day of March, 2018.

PAMELA J. GRIFFETH
Notary Public - State of Kansas
My Appt. Expires 08-17-2019

Notary Public J. Hilly to

My Appointment Expires: August 17, 2019

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I, the undersigned, certify that a true and correct copy of the above and foregoing Staff Testimony in Support of Black Hills' Settlement Agreement was served by electronic service on this 9th day of March, 2018, to the following:

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