

Citizens Action Coalition NEWS RELEASE

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Legislature Votes to Raise Taxes through Utility Bills House adds eminent domain to bill

Once again, utility ratepayers, aka taxpayers, remain invisible to 104 of the 150 elected officials in the Indiana General Assembly. On Thursday, both Chambers of the General Assembly voted to raise the utility bills of Hoosiers. Two companion bills being sold to the public under the guise of “clean” energy, SB251 & HB1128, were both voted out of their respective chambers in overwhelming fashion.

Kerwin Olson, Program Director at Citizens Action Coalition, said: “It is simply unconscionable to CAC that at a time when vital human services for vulnerable populations are being cut dramatically, 104 elected officials would raise taxes on hard working and struggling Hoosiers. Let’s not forget, the utility bills of school corporations, municipalities, and other governmental entities are paid by tax dollars. Rate increases are tax increases in disguise.”

“These investor owned utilities are State franchised monopolies sheltered from risk and market forces,” stated Grant Smith, Executive Director at CAC. “These monopolies earned over \$3B last year in combined earnings. To reward these corporations with extra profit for doing absolutely nothing is completely disgusting. It is evident that the public doesn’t stand a chance at the Indiana Statehouse as the influence peddling of special interest lobbyists is clearly running our State.”

The intent of SB251 and HB1128 is as follows:

- 1) To deregulate the revenues of utilities overtime by mandating State regulators rubber stamp their requests for rate increases.
- 2) To allow utilities to avoid going in for rate cases. Avoiding rate cases enables overearnings of utilities and conceals their books from public scrutiny.
- 3) To shift all risk to captive ratepayers by mandating they pay for construction of new power plants before they generate electricity and even if they never produce a single kWh of energy.

- 4) To create a “voluntary” clean energy standard which is nothing but a fraud and window dressing to grant the monopoly utilities extra profit for doing what they are already doing or planning to do.

Adding insult to injury, the House of Representatives added eminent domain for a private corporation, Denbury Resources, to SB251. “Not only did the monopoly utilities get an undeserved raise, a Texas pipeline company gets to condemn our property. I doubt this is what the voters of Indiana had in mind when they went to the polls last November,” concluded Mr. Olson.

Click this link for the House roll call:

<http://www.in.gov/legislative/bills/2011/PDF/Hrollcal/0622.PDF.pdf>

Click this link for the Senate roll call:

<http://www.in.gov/legislative/bills/2011/PDF/Srollcal/0446.PDF.pdf>

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