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Group opposing AmerenUE's proposed rate hike files papers with PSC defending its campaign

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By Jo Mannies, Beacon Political Reporter



Posted 9:30 p.m. Wed., 12.30.09 -- A coalition of corporations and groups opposing AmerenUE's proposed 18 percent rate hike filed documents late Wednesday with the **Missouri Public Service Commission**, in which the coalition defends its publicity campaign against the hike.

The coalition is called the **Fair Electricity Rate Action Fund (FERAF)**. Wednesday's filing was response to AmerenUE's formal request that the PSC order the group to stop its opposition activities, which have included phone banks, e-releases, and soon-to-be-aired radio ads.

The coalition members and others who joined in the filing include the Missouri chapter of the **American Association of Retired Persons**, the Missouri Office of Public Counsel, The Missouri Retailers Association (Schnuck's, Macy's, J.C. Penney among other AmerenUE commercial customers), the **Consumer Council of Missouri**, the **Midwest Energy Users Association** (WalMart, Best Buy), and a large corporate group called **Missouri Industrial Energy Consumers** (Anheuser-Busch, Boeing, Doe Run, Ford, General Motors, Noranda Aluminum, Monsanto and 12 other major St. Louis industrial companies).

In its PSC filing, the coalition says that its members have a constitutional right to challenge AmerenUE's proposed rate hike. The coalition also cites AmerenUE's own public-relations effort: promote its requested rate hike.

Earlier this year, AmerenUE lost a court fight to block a similar opposition campaign launched by some customers who opposed the utility's quest during the last legislative session to repeal Missouri's 33-year-old law -- approved by voters in 1976 -- that bars utilities from increasing rates to help pay for plants or equipment not yet built (dubbed "CWIP").

FERAF consultant Gregg Keller, who also was a leader in the earlier anti-Ameren fight, said the coalition "is working to inform the general public about the 18 percent rate hike moving its way through Jefferson City."

Despite AmerenUE's efforts, he said, "FERAF will continue to communicate with the public."

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Witness Exhibit 1.1 - 4
Date 2-10-10 Case No. ER-2010-0036
Reporter KKF