



How to Make Your Voice Heard

A guide to making comments at Public Utility Commission hearings

Did you know that anyone can provide public comments to their state public utility commission (PUC) or ratepayer advocate about issues like rising energy bills, power outages, utility investments, or community health impacts. You don't need to be an expert.

When utilities propose major investments or rate increases that impact your bill, public utility commissions will often invite public input. Submitting a public comment is a powerful way to be heard by your state energy regulators. Public comments are welcome and needed. They help energy system regulators understand how their decisions affect the day-to-day lives of real people, and communities. Individuals can share personal experiences, raise concerns, and offer perspectives that can influence outcomes, support or oppose proposals, and help energy regulators make decisions that better serve the public.

Maybe you're concerned about rising electric bills or frequent power outages in your neighborhood. Maybe a new development, like a data center, is coming to your community and you want to ensure ratepayers like you won't be stuck with the bill. Maybe you care about climate change and you want to be sure your utility investments align with state climate goals.

If you're ready to try, the next step is to find out about opportunities in your state. PUC comment opportunities usually arise during "rate cases" or other state regulatory proceedings — formal processes where commissions decide whether to approve utility plans, spending, or rate changes. Each case has specific deadlines and instructions for submitting comments. These are typically posted on your PUC's website. Some states also allow people to speak during virtual or in-person public hearings.

Once you've found an opportunity, it's just a matter of writing compelling testimony and submitting it by the deadline. Written comments are usually uploaded through an online "docket" system or email portal. In some cases, you may also have the option to read testimony aloud at a public hearing.

How to write a public comment

No matter what issue your testimony supports or opposes, effective comments usually include:

1. **A brief introduction with a clear request (your "ask")**
2. **Your personal story**
3. **Relevant facts**
4. **A strong conclusion – reiterating your "ask."**

Build your own comment using these tips:

1. **A simple intro and a clear request**

First, introduce yourself and state your request: "My name is [NAME], and I live in [CITY]. I urge the Commission to [WHAT YOU WANT REGULATORS TO DO OR NOT DO]."

Explain why your request matters. For example: “This decision is crucial to protecting my family and our community from [HIGH ENERGY BILLS, UNHEALTHY AIR POLLUTION, CLIMATE POLLUTION, UNRELIABLE SERVICE, ETC.]”

2. Your personal story

Sharing your unique story creates a public record that helps regulators understand the real-world consequences of their decisions. Maybe it’s a tale of how rising energy bills are impacting your family, what you’ve done to try and address the problem, why you were inspired to testify. Maybe you have an underlying medical condition, like diabetes, that would be directly affected if, say, long power outages kept you from refrigerating your insulin. If you’re providing live testimony, keep in mind that hearings usually have strict time limits. Specifics are key when telling your story:

- How will this utility proposal affect you directly?
- What would higher bills or outages mean for your family?
- How would new infrastructure change your neighborhood?

If you’re giving testimony related to climate impacts, you can also share personal experiences with extreme heat, wildfires, floods, storms, or other events affecting your community. You may wish to discuss energy justice concerns, such as whether certain neighborhoods or vulnerable populations bear disproportionate burdens from utility decisions.

3. Relevant facts

Facts matter. We know energy bills can be affected by utilities’ profit margins, and that data center owners make large profits from each center, while the costs of readying the grid for huge demand increases can make energy bills go up for ordinary households. We know that power outages can prevent people from accessing health care, or raise costs when stores have to throw out spoiled food. We know that investing in modern technology can help make the energy grid cleaner and more efficient, and that investing in fossil-fired energy can lead to increased air pollution, worsened asthma, allergies, respiratory illnesses, and more. These are established facts. For more details to support your personal testimony, look to trusted sources, and provide references whenever possible.

4. Conclusion - reiterate your ask

Take the opportunity -- after sharing an introduction, an ask, your personal story, and relevant facts -- to conclude and reiterate your main ask. For example: “Once again, I strongly [SUPPORT OR OPPOSE] this proposal to [WHATEVER YOU ARE SUPPORTING OR OPPOSING]. I urge the Commission to fulfill its responsibility to protect my family and all utility customers.”

Next-step: share your story

After submitting your comment to the official rate case docket by the specified deadline, you can *share your testimony with friends, family, or advocacy organizations* to raise further awareness. You can also post a quote from your comment on social media and tag your public utility commission, mayor, or governor.

Thank you for speaking up. Keep your eyes and ears open for your next opportunity to provide public comments and get an energy system that meets your needs. ⁱ

Adapted with permission from the [Moms Clean Air Force EPA comments page](#)