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BEFORE THE
FLORIDA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

In the Matter of:

DOCKET NO. 20240026-EI

Petition for rate increase
by Tampa Electric Company.
_____ /

PROCEEDINGS: SERVICE HEARING

COMMISSIONERS
PARTICIPATING: CHAIRMAN MIKE LA ROSA
COMMISSIONER ART GRAHAM
COMMISSIONER GARY F. CLARK
COMMISSIONER ANDREW GILES FAY
COMMISSIONER GABRIELLA PASSIDOMO

DATE: Monday, June 10, 2024

TIME: Commenced: 6:00 p.m.
Concluded: 7:15 p.m.

PLACE: Betty Easley Conference Center
Room 148
4075 Esplanade Way
Tallahassee, Florida

REPORTED BY: DEBRA R. KRICK
Court Reporter and
Notary Public in and for
the State of Florida at Large

PREMIER REPORTING
TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA
(850) 894-0828

1 APPEARANCES:

2 MALCOLM N. MEANS, ESQUIRE, Tampa Electric
3 Company, 123 South Calhoun Street, Tallahassee, Florida
4 32301; appearing on behalf of Tampa Electric Company
5 (TECO).

6 OCTAVIO PONCE and AUSTIN WATROUS, ESQUIRES,
7 OFFICE OF PUBLIC COUNSEL, c/o The Florida Legislature,
8 111 West Madison Street, Room 812, Tallahassee, Florida
9 32399-1400, appearing on behalf of the Citizens of the
10 State of Florida (OPC.).

11 BRADLEY MARSHALL and JORDAN LUBKEMAN,
12 ESQUIRES, Earthjustice, 111 S. Martin Luther King Jr.
13 Boulevard, Tallahassee, Florida 32301; appearing on
14 behalf of Florida Rising (Florida Rising) and League of
15 United Latin American Citizens of Florida (LULAC).

16 NIHAL SHRINATH, ESQUIRE, 2101 Webster Street,
17 Suite 1300, Oakland, California 94612; and SARI AMIEL,
18 ESQUIRE, 50 F St. NW, Eighth Floor, Washington, DC
19 20001; appearing on behalf of Sierra Club (Sierra Club).

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1 APPEARANCES CONTINUED:

2 CARLOS MARQUEZ, TIMOTHY SPARKS and ADRIA
3 HARPER, ESQUIRES, FPSC General Counsel's Office, 2540
4 Shumard Oak Boulevard, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0850,
5 appearing on behalf of the Florida Public Service
6 Commission (Staff).

7 KEITH HETRICK, GENERAL COUNSEL; MARY ANNE
8 HELTON, DEPUTY GENERAL COUNSEL, Florida Public Service
9 Commission, 2540 Shumard Oak Boulevard, Tallahassee,
10 Florida 32399-0850, Advisor to the Florida Public
11 Service Commission.

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1 PROCEEDINGS

2 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Good evening, everybody,
3 and welcome to this customer service hearing. This
4 is a part of the review of the Tampa Electric
5 Company's request for a rate adjustment.

6 Today's service hearing is an important part
7 of the process and is dedicated to hearing from
8 you, the customers.

9 My name is Mike La Rosa. I am privileged to
10 be serving as the Chair of the Florida Public
11 Service Commission. Along with me are my fellow
12 Commissioners. I would like to give them an
13 opportunity to each introduce themselves.

14 With us on-line, or dialed in, is Commissioner
15 Graham. And, Commissioner Graham, if you can hear
16 us, let's go ahead and start with you.

17 COMMISSIONER GRAHAM: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

18 Good evening, everybody. My name is Art
19 Graham. I am one of your five Commissioners on the
20 Florida Public Service Commission.

21 We are here to hear from you, the customers,
22 today on the TECO rate case. This is your time to
23 tell us what you think about TECO. We want to hear
24 the good. We want to hear the bad. We want to
25 hear the ugly. I mean, this is the state of

1 Florida, and we are a monopoly, so we understand
2 you don't have a choice on who provides your power,
3 but that doesn't mean that you should not get
4 premium service, and we want to hear from you. We
5 want to hear about customer service. We want to
6 hear about dependability. We want to hear about
7 everything you have to say about TECO. Now is the
8 time to do it.

9 The chairman has been very gracious to have
10 several virtual hearings and some in-person
11 hearings out in the service area, so don't be shy.
12 We know it's difficult sometimes for people to come
13 to the mic and to speak, but now is the time for
14 you to let us know what you think about TECO.

15 Thank you.

16 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you, Commissioner
17 Graham.

18 Good luck following that. Commissioner Fay,
19 you want to go next?

20 COMMISSIONER FAY: I think it would be
21 appropriate for Commissioner Clark just for
22 seniority purposes.

23 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Sure. Sure. I will let
24 him follow up.

25 COMMISSIONER CLARK: He would do that to me,

1 wouldn't he? Yeah, that is hard to follow up.

2 Thank you, Commissioner Graham for those remarks.

3 My name is Gary Clark. I am also one of your
4 Public Service Commission Commissioners. It's a
5 privilege to be here with you today. I want to
6 just say a special thank you to all of the
7 customers who have taken time out of your schedules
8 to plan to call in tonight and to give us this
9 testimony. As Commissioner Graham said, we do look
10 forward to hearing your thoughts and your opinions
11 about the service that you have received from TECO,
12 and we look forward to resolving this hopefully in
13 a manner that benefits everyone involved in the
14 very near future.

15 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

16 COMMISSIONER FAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

17 I will echo what my colleagues said. Being
18 from Tampa originally, and just seeing the list of
19 these customers, it hits home for me a little bit.
20 I want to make sure we do our usual due diligence
21 listening to customers and their feedback. But
22 also I think it's important, as Commissioner Graham
23 said, to hear the good, the bad and everything in
24 between.

25 So I appreciate all the customers for taking

1 this time. I know some of you have probably been
2 at work all day, and this is not an easy task to
3 jump on line if you have other responsibilities
4 like children, or anything else. So thank you for
5 taking the time.

6 And I won't take up any more time than that,
7 Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

8 COMMISSIONER PASSIDOMO: Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

9 My name is Gabriella Passidomo. I am the last
10 of the five Commissioners here. I just, again,
11 echo my colleagues' statements. The only thing I
12 might add to it is that in addition to what
13 Commissioner Graham said about, you know, speaking
14 candidly to us in all -- in these forums, also,
15 there is an opportunity to submit written comments.
16 Our offices has already received a great deal of
17 them, and we really encourage you to continue
18 submitting them. We review each of those
19 individually and take those into consideration when
20 making our decision. That helps.

21 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Also. Thank you. And well
22 said by my fellow Commissioners.

23 Mr. Sparks, are you ready? Let's go ahead and
24 read the notice.

25 MR. SPARKS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

1 By notice published on May 24th, 2024, this
2 time and place was set for a customer service
3 hearing in Docket No. 20240026-EI. The purpose of
4 this hearing is set forth more fully in the notice.

5 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you.

6 Moving to appearances of the counsel. Let's
7 start with Tampa Electric Company.

8 MR. MEANS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And good
9 evening, Commissioners.

10 I am Malcolm Means with the Ausley McMullen
11 Law Firm appearing on behalf of Tampa Electric. I
12 also have from Tampa Electric here with me tonight,
13 Karen Sparkman, Vice-President Customer Experience,
14 and to her right, Penelope Rusk, Vice-President
15 Regulatory.

16 Thank you.

17 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you.

18 Office of Public Counsel.

19 MR. PONCE: Good evening. This is Octavio
20 Ponce with Office of Public Counsel. I also have
21 with me my fellow associate of the Public Counsel,
22 Austin Watrous.

23 Thank you.

24 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you.

25 Florida Rising.

1 MR. MARSHALL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

2 Bradley Marshall and Jordan Lubkeman on behalf
3 of Florida Rising and the League of United Latin
4 American Citizens of Florida, better known as
5 LULAC.

6 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you.

7 I believe have Sierra Club. Are they -- I
8 think they called in, or dialed in.

9 MR. SHRINATH: Good evening, Mr. Chairman.

10 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: There we go. Yes.

11 MR. SHRINATH: Good evening, Mr. Chairman.

12 This is Nihal Shrinath appearing on behalf of
13 Sierra Club. I also have my colleague Sari Amiel
14 appearing remotely as well.

15 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you. I think that's
16 all we have as far as counsel that has dialed in,
17 or, of course, appeared before us.

18 Once again, let me begin by thanking everyone
19 for their time and taking an important -- go ahead,
20 Mr. Sparks.

21 MR. SPARKS: I would just like to enter an
22 appearance for counsel for staff. Myself, Tim
23 Sparks, my co-counsel, Carlos Marquez, and Adria
24 Harper. And also we have with us the General
25 Counsel for the Commission, Keith Hetrick.

1 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: How could I forget our own
2 staff and our own General Counsel. Sorry, Keith.

3 All right. Now, I will jump over. So I
4 certainly want to thank everyone for taking their
5 time out of their schedule. I think my
6 Commissioners before have said how important that
7 is, and I certainly echo those words.

8 In August, there will be a technical hearing
9 where the Commission will hear witness testimony,
10 receive evidence of this case. I encourage
11 everyone to watch the hearing, follow it on our
12 website. It will give you certainly a better
13 understanding of the process and how we ultimately
14 make our decision.

15 This is a meeting that will be transcribed and
16 will become part of the official record. For those
17 of you who have preregistered to speak, you were
18 given an option to check off an affirmation of your
19 testimony today. If you have not previously
20 provided this affirmation, I will need to swear you
21 in over the phone before you share your comments.

22 Please note that your comments will be subject
23 to cross-examination, meaning that you may be asked
24 questions either by the parties or by one of us as
25 Commissioners. I don't say that to be intimidating

1 by any way, but we just want to make sure that you
2 are understood and we make sure we hear what you
3 are saying correctly.

4 In addition to sharing your comments here, you
5 may also provide comments and additional material
6 by traditional mail or by email. To contact the
7 Commission by mail, you can find the pre-addressed
8 comment card for download on our website. You can
9 also email us at clerk@psc.state.fl.us, and
10 reference Docket No. 20240026-EI in the subject
11 line. I am going to repeat it again. Docket No.
12 20240026-EI, again in the subject line.

13 And whether your comments are made verbally
14 today or received in writing, be assured that you
15 are comments will be reviewed and considered in the
16 evaluation of this case.

17 So let's -- I hear a little additional bit of
18 kind of a wisp as I am speaking, so I will let
19 staff in the back tell me if that's interfering
20 with anything.

21 Before we hear from the customers, I do want
22 to allow a brief opening statement from the parties
23 that are here with us or, of course, on the phone.
24 Please limit your statements to three minutes so
25 that we can ensure that our customers have the

1 opportunity to speak.

2 Let's go ahead and start with Tampa Electric
3 Company.

4 MR. MEANS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And Ms.
5 Sparkman is going to deliver a few remarks for the
6 company.

7 Thank you.

8 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you.

9 MS. SPARKMAN: Good evening, Commissioners and
10 ladies and gentlemen. I am Karen Sparkman, and I
11 am the Vice-President of customer experience for
12 Tampa Electric. We appreciate having the
13 opportunity to participate in this hearing today.

14 Tampa Electric has proudly supplied the Tampa
15 Bay area with electricity since 1899. We serve
16 about 2,000 square miles in west central Florida,
17 including Hillsborough County and part of Polk,
18 Pasco and Pinellas Counties, which include more
19 than 840,000 customers.

20 Tampa Electric has invested in solar projects
21 to serve customers without fuel costs, and now has
22 enough to power more than 200,000 homes. By the
23 end of 2026, we will add almost 40 percent more
24 solar capacity, which will be enough to serve
25 260,000 homes.

1 Our decision to request a rate increase was
2 not an easy one. We know rising prices due to
3 inflation continue to affect businesses and
4 families everywhere. However, Tampa Electric must
5 continue to enhance reliability and improve
6 resiliency against storms and cyber attacks, to
7 provide more convenience to customers, and to
8 increase energy generation with the least amount of
9 fuel possible, which helps us keep customer bills
10 as low as possible over time.

11 Like other businesses, Tampa Electric has been
12 impacted by higher than expected inflation, labor
13 market challenges, supply chain disruptions and
14 rising interest rates. We know our customers
15 require safe, efficient and reliable electricity.
16 Our OSHA safety results in 2023 were our all time
17 best.

18 We have improved the efficiency of our
19 generating fleet by 20 percent since 2017. We have
20 also reduced the frequency of power outages by 21
21 percent, and shortened the duration of those
22 outages by 22 percent. Our flickers were 30
23 percent less frequent. We provided 99.98 percent
24 service reliability for our customers in 2023.

25 We are available to help if you have any

1 specific questions regarding our request for a rate
2 increase, or have questions about your electric
3 bill or other service concerns. Our customer care
4 number is (888)223-0800.

5 We would like to thank the Commissioners,
6 staff and our customers for participating in this
7 hearing.

8 Thank you.

9 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you.

10 Let's move to the Office of Public Counsel.

11 MR. PONCE: Good evening. Thank you,
12 Commissioners. I appreciate the opportunity to
13 speak.

14 Again, my name is Octavio Ponce, and I have
15 the privilege of representing the customers of
16 Tampa Electric Company through my employment with
17 the Office of Public Counsel.

18 For those on the line who are not aware, the
19 Office of Public Counsel is an office created by
20 the Legislature to represent all of the utility
21 customers in the state of Florida.

22 We are here today, because TECO has filed a
23 request for a large increase to their current
24 rates. As such, we have hired expert witnesses to
25 evaluate all of TECO's requests. We have engaged

1 in extensive discovery with the company, and we
2 have deposed several of their witnesses in order to
3 identify areas which we can create savings for the
4 customers.

5 Some of the primary areas that we have
6 identified in this rate case where we believe we
7 can reduce the rate and capture savings for
8 customers are to follow:

9 First of all, in the initial revenue
10 requirement, TECO is requesting a base revenue
11 increase of approximately \$296 million effective on
12 or about January 1st, 2025. The Office of Public
13 Counsel is recommending to the Commission to limit
14 this amount to no more than approximately 75
15 million through the areas for cost savings that we
16 have identified and that we will be arguing when we
17 get the chance to do so.

18 Subsequent year adjustments. On top of the
19 2025 ask that I just mentioned, TECO is also asking
20 for additional revenue increases for 2026 and 2027
21 in the form of what we call subsequent year
22 adjustments. These amounts were approximately 100
23 million more for 2026, and approximately 71 million
24 more for 2027.

25 OPC is recommending increases of no more than

1 50 million for 2026, and no more than 24 million in
2 2027. We believe that these cost savings can be
3 found in the areas of TECO's proposals for several
4 new projects that we believe should be considered
5 routine replacements.

6 Forecasting. The area of forecasting, we
7 believe that TECO's sales forecast underestimates
8 the amounts revenue growth they will be seeing.
9 Florida is one of the biggest estimations in the
10 country for growth and for incoming new citizens
11 and new residents, which means more customers.
12 Therefore, we are -- OPC is recommending
13 forecasting using higher, more appropriate sales
14 revenues in order to keep the customers' rates more
15 affordable.

16 Affiliate transactions. OPC has described
17 TECO's transactions between its affiliated
18 companies, including TECO's parent company, Emera,
19 and is asking to lower those costs to make sure
20 that the revenues given -- any revenue increases
21 that TECO is given not only remain as small as
22 possible to benefit the customer, but also to make
23 sure that this money remains here in Florida.

24 Finally, return on equity, or ROE. The
25 utility is appropriately entitled to a reasonable

1 amount of return on equity. However, the utility
2 has requested a return on equity of 11.5 percent,
3 which OPC contends is not reasonable. Our research
4 indicates that TECO only requires an ROE of 9.5
5 percent in order to provide a reasonable profit to
6 its shareholders.

7 These aren't the only areas that we have
8 examined and that we will be continuing to examine.
9 Also, keep in mind that the law requires TECO to
10 prove all of what they are -- that all of what they
11 are asking for is reasonable and prudent. Any area
12 that we believe TECO has not met this burden will
13 be met with a challenge from OPC.

14 With that being said, as your Commissioners
15 eloquently put it, today is your hearing. This is
16 not OPC's hearing. It's not TECO's hearing. It's
17 not my hearing. It is yours. Please take
18 advantage of this opportunity to speak up. You can
19 -- you have the chance here today to tell the
20 Commissioners everything about TECO, the good, the
21 bad or the ugly. You can talk about the quality of
22 TECO's service. How you feel about the proposed
23 rate increase. Anything under the sun concerning
24 TECO. This is your chance.

25 I look forward to hearing from you. Thank you

1 very much.

2 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you.

3 And just kind of a quick reminder, anyone that
4 has dialed in, just, if you don't mind, please put
5 yourself on mute while you are waiting your turn to
6 speak. We are going to jump to customers in a few
7 more seconds. We have got a few more opening
8 statements.

9 Let's go to Florida Rising and LULAC. You are
10 recognized.

11 MR. MARSHALL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

12 Bradley Marshall on behalf of Florida Rising and
13 LULAC.

14 Florida Rising and LULAC are associations of
15 residential customers, and are in this case because
16 last year TECO had the third highest residential
17 electricity bills in the nation out of 149
18 utilities with more than 100,00 residential
19 customers.

20 There are two parts to a rate case. First,
21 the size of the pie, how much rates increased; and
22 second, how the pie is sliced. How much each
23 customer class pays, also known as cost of service.

24 TECO and others want to give a very large
25 slice of that pie to residential customers. The

1 argument is that TECO's power plants should be
2 allocated based on capacity demand; that is, their
3 ability to meet the peak, the hour of highest
4 energy usage each summer and winter, which shifts
5 costs on the residential customer.

6 The problem with that, as TECO admits, solar
7 power investments are the bulk of their generating
8 investment. Yet, by 2027, which is included in
9 this rate case, Florida power plants will
10 contribute just 1.5 percent of their total capacity
11 to meeting the summer peak, meaning a 75-megawatt
12 solar plant will contribute just over one megawatt
13 to summer peak, and nothing, nothing at all, to
14 winter peak. The sun isn't out yet.

15 Now, we are pro solar, but we also have to
16 acknowledge, as I think TECO does, that the true
17 value of solar comes from the energy it produces
18 throughout the day, reducing the need to for
19 burning more fossil fuel, not in its small
20 contribution during the highest hour of the summer
21 book; therefore, we think they should allocate
22 those costs based on energy.

23 As you can imagine, big industrial customers
24 use a lot of energy. And since that's where the
25 value of solar comes from, that's how we should

1 distribute those costs. Since the big industrials
2 drive energy usage, they should also pay their fair
3 share of the costs towards generation.

4 We also think that TECO's requested 11.5
5 percent return on equity, essentially guaranteed
6 profits, is really high. TECO is owned by Emera,
7 headquartered in Nova Scotia, Nova Scotia Power,
8 also owned by Emera, operates just fine with a nine
9 percent return on equity. If nine percent is good
10 enough for their home territory, it should be good
11 enough for them in Florida.

12 We also don't think they need to be spending
13 hundreds of millions of dollars of your money on a
14 brand new headquarters building because they don't
15 want to extend the lease on their current
16 headquarters, nor in building a fossil fuel power
17 plant to serve as backup power for the Air Force
18 Base. If the Air Force wants backup power
19 specifically for them, we they think they should
20 pay for it. Not you.

21 I am looking forward to your testimony today,
22 and thank you for participating.

23 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

24 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you.

25 Let's move to the Sierra Club. You are

1 recognized when you are ready.

2 MR. SHRINATH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good
3 evening. Nihal Shrinath on behalf of Sierra Club.

4 Sierra Club is mainly concerned with TECO's
5 insistence on keeping uneconomic coal units
6 on-line, despite barely utilizing them, and despite
7 their cost to ratepayers.

8 As you have heard from other parties, TECO has
9 some of the highest -- highest rates in the
10 country, one of the least diverse resource mixes in
11 the country, and a very high planning reserve
12 margin. A part of why this is the case is that
13 TECO has continued to rely upon two already
14 uneconomic coal-fired plants, Big Bend 4 and Polk
15 1. At each of these units, when run on coal,
16 operating and maintenance costs and fuel costs
17 exceed their benefits to ratepayers, and we've
18 shown this in opening testimony.

19 In three of the past five years, running Big
20 Bend on coal has been uneconomic. And TECO,
21 itself, has admitted that it will run coal on Big
22 Bend 4 going forward at a very low capacity factor.

23 In each of the past five years, keeping Polk
24 components on-line has been uneconomic. Indeed,
25 TECO has not burned coal at Polk since 2018. Yet

1 it insists on keeping Polk's coal gasification
2 components on-line in order to potentially hedge
3 against natural gas prices in the future.

4 This theoretical endeavor is costing
5 ratepayers additional funds they don't need to be
6 paying, and runs the risk of costing ratepayers
7 millions of additional dollars in environmental
8 compliance costs.

9 The simple fact is that today, TECO could
10 retire the coal components in Polk 1 and commit to
11 stop running Big Bend 4 on coal, drawing down on
12 its existing coal supplies, and using Big Bend 4 as
13 a purely gas plant before retirement.

14 Sierra Club welcomes TECO's proposed
15 additional solar capacity, which is a less costly,
16 environmentally cleaner alternative source of
17 energy, and encourages more solar build-out, and
18 build-out of energy storage to enable the
19 retirements of Polk 1 and Big Bend 4. It's just so
20 expensive to run on gas. When paired with storage,
21 solar energy can provide ramping capacity to meet
22 peak demand.

23 We've also highlighted in testimony that
24 TECO's coal and gas units face potentially
25 exorbitant environmental compliance costs

1 associated with the four environmental rules that
2 were finalized by EPA in April of this year.

3 For example, EPA's new effluent limitations
4 guidelines require zero wastewater discharge by
5 2028. EPA estimates that this requirement will
6 require \$129 million in capital costs, and \$9
7 million in annual O&M costs at Big Bend 4 alone, as
8 well as 10 million in capital costs, and nearly a
9 million in annual O&M costs at Polk 1.

10 Three other rules, the Greenhouse Gas
11 Emissions standard, the Mercury and Air Toxics
12 regulations, and the Coal Combustion Residual
13 standards were updated in April, and each has the
14 potential of increasing costs substantially or
15 reducing flexibility at Polk 1 and Big Bend 4.

16 Finally, TECO is leaving money on the table
17 for ratepayers by not applying for available
18 federal funding in the Infrastructure Investment
19 and Jobs Act. TECO can save ratepayers money by
20 taking advantage of low cost loans that are
21 available from the Energy Infrastructure
22 Reinvestment program to provide funding for
23 utilities to refinance existing plant balances and
24 reinvest their savings in clean energy resources.

25 To ensure just and reasonable rates for TECO

1 customers, we ask this commission require TECO to
2 retire any coal or any equipment at Polk 1 as soon
3 as possible, and disapprove recovery of TECO's
4 spending on its Polk 1 flexibility project unless
5 TECO shows that it can bring the unit to STT with
6 lower costs than retiring the unit and replacing it
7 with a clean energy portfolio.

8 We ask the Commission to require TECO to
9 retire all coal burning equipment at Big Bend 4 as
10 soon as possible as well. And we ask the
11 Commission to require TECO to submit an application
12 to the DOE for funding for the EIR program to
13 replace Big Bend 4 with clean energy resources.

14 Thank you for the opportunity to make these
15 comments.

16 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you.

17 Let's move into our customer testimony, that's
18 actually tonight's --

19 MR. MEANS: Mr. Chair?

20 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Yes, sir.

21 MR. MEANS: Sorry, right here.

22 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Yep.

23 MR. MEANS: I have one housekeeping item. Do
24 you want to take it up now, or at the end of the
25 hearing? Either way is fine with me.

1 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: It depends on what it is.

2 MR. MEANS: I have a copy with me of our
3 composite notice exhibit that we filed in the rate
4 case docket on Friday that demonstrates our
5 compliance with Rule 25-22.0406, including the
6 notice requirements for this hearing, and I would
7 just like to enter that into the record at the
8 appropriate time.

9 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Let's enter it at the end
10 of the meeting in case there is any other exhibits
11 that are --

12 MR. MEANS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

13 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Perfect.

14 All right. So moving into our customer
15 testimony section of tonight's hearing. I would
16 like to start with any public officials. I know I
17 have a list of folks that have signed up, but they
18 have not demonstrated whether they are public
19 officials, so I will ask the question.

20 Are there any public officials that are on the
21 line that are scheduled to speak today? Any public
22 elected officials?

23 MS. PATE: I am scheduled to speak today.

24 Krystal Pate.

25 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: And I am sorry, can you

1 identify yourself?

2 MS. PATE: Krystal Pate.

3 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Krystal, and you are an
4 elected official?

5 MS. PATE: I think I am.

6 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Okay. I don't know how to
7 ask that question of qualification.

8 MS. PATE: I am on the -- Brittany Panton --

9 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: All right. What --

10 MS. PATE: -- Panton, I'm on the list with
11 Brittany Panton, Tampa, Florida.

12 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Okay. And so what office
13 do you hold? Are you a customer of TECO or are you
14 a public official, meaning that you are an elected
15 official that holds office, like a county
16 commissioner or --

17 MS. PATE: I was elected to -- I am a customer
18 of TECO, but I am on the -- (inaudible) --

19 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Okay. I --

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, I believe
21 that she's the first customer that -- here -- you
22 know, that signed up to speak. I don't believe
23 that she's an elected official, though.

24 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Okay. I will take that.

25 So --

1 MS. PATE: Yes.

2 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: -- Ms. Panton, we are going
3 to get you to here in just a few seconds, so just
4 hold tight.

5 So not hearing any other elected officials, I
6 am going to -- with me -- or with us today is
7 Octavio Ponce. You have already heard him, of
8 course, in the opening statements, with the Public
9 Counsel's office. He is your voice in the process.
10 He is going to be helping us out tonight by calling
11 the different speakers that are on the line. So
12 how he is going to do this is that he is going to
13 call out three names. So I ask you to please
14 listen closely to the names that he calls, and then
15 I will call them as they are coming up.

16 So of course, it's based on when you signed
17 up. It's not in an alphabetical order by any
18 means, just who signed up on the website initially
19 or first.

20 So, Octavio, I will throw it to you to
21 announce the first three individuals.

22 MR. PONCE: Thank you, Chairman.

23 The first three caller -- customers are
24 Brittany Panton, Krystal Pate and Joseph Nystrom.

25 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Ms. Panton, it sounds like

1 you are on the line. You have got five minutes,
2 and I like to try to keep most speakers to just
3 five minutes so that we can make sure that everyone
4 has a chance to speak, but you are recognized.
5 Please proceed with your comments.

6 MS. PANTON: Okay. Hello, my name is
7 Brittany, and I am a resident of Hillsborough
8 County for over 30 years.

9 I am here to speak about TECO requesting a
10 rate hike. My concern is that TECO received a rate
11 hike last year and that caused a burden on my
12 household. It matters to me because we are working
13 to pay bills, not working to live. This is
14 unacceptable and very much unfair.

15 The Public Service Commission is to make sure
16 that our utilities are at a fair rate, and lately
17 we have been let down. I cannot afford to save any
18 money due to raising of everything around me,
19 electricity, water, rent, property taxes and gas.

20 TECO is a monopoly that profit over people.
21 Enough is enough. Please oppose TECO rate hike
22 increase proposal because it's not right and it's
23 not fair.

24 Also, TECO is taking our money to move
25 headquarters to get out of a flood zone. How do it

1 make us feel if we are located in a flood zone? We
2 don't have money to move from a flood home. It's
3 not fair.

4 I have friends, residents that stay behind the
5 coal ash that has been getting sick due to not the
6 upkeeping of it. What do we say about that? We
7 have been in the news asking for help, nobody is
8 hearing our cries. When will TECO take
9 accountability of things that they have done to us?

10 Please oppose the rate hike. This is Brittany
11 Panton. Thank you.

12 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you, Ms. Panton.

13 Krystal Pate. Krystal Pate, you are
14 recognized.

15 MS. PATE: Good evening. I am Krystal Pate,
16 and I am speaking on behalf of myself and the
17 community for the high interest rate that TECO has
18 that we can't even afford cost of living, medicine.
19 We have to piggyback off which bill we are going to
20 be able to pay, whether that's our lights, our
21 water, our rent, daycare, parties for our
22 children's birthdays. We can't -- I can't afford
23 sometimes not even food for my family because the
24 TECO electric interest is sky high.

25 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Okay. Thank you --

1 MS. PATE: And to the point that took has -- I
2 am sorry, sir, to the point that TECO has turned my
3 service off, and this is very unfair. And I am
4 also on a fixed income trying to provide for six
5 children with a high electric bill, and there are
6 times where I cannot even afford food, medical
7 expenses and daycare for my children.

8 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you for your
9 comments --

10 MS. PATE: Thank you, sir.

11 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: -- Ms. Pate.

12 MS. PATE: Thank you.

13 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Next up is -- thank you.

14 Next up is Joseph Nystrom. Joseph Nystrom.

15 Not hearing Mr. Nystrom, Mr. Ponce, you can
16 recognize the next speaker?

17 MR. PONCE: Thank you.

18 The next three names are David Coleman,
19 Candace Sammons and Cedric Carrolls. I believe the
20 last, Ms. Carrolls -- or Mr. Carrolls needs to be
21 sworn in.

22 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Okay. Excellent. I will
23 get to that when his name is up.

24 Mr. Coleman, David Coleman, you are
25 recognized, sir.

1 MR. COLEMAN: Okay. Can you hear me?

2 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Yes, we can.

3 MR. COLEMAN: Hello.

4 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Yes, we can hear you.

5 MR. COLEMAN: Oh, okay. Great. Thank you.

6 And I don't know that I was sworn in, but I swear

7 to tell the whole truth as I know it.

8 Anyway, the people who shared beforehand did
9 the details that have been sharing locally in the
10 community at community meetings, so when Food and
11 Water Watch, Sierra Club, and the others that were
12 presenting gave details, so many in the community
13 are very aware of -- hello.

14 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Yes, we are here.

15 MR. COLEMAN: Can you hear me?

16 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Yes, we can hear you.

17 MR. COLEMAN: Okay. There is some
18 interferences, other noise going on. I wasn't sure
19 what was happening. It's good that I have five
20 minutes because I am going to try and get to the
21 point.

22 We have been having community meetings and
23 organizing for quite a while now, and the major
24 talking points have been presented earlier in your
25 meeting by various groups that are there in the

1 room.

2 My experience with TECO began a number of
3 years ago when I became aware of the unlined coal
4 ash piles that were condemned back in 2000, and it
5 wasn't until 2018 that TECO came up with a plan to
6 remove those coal ash piles. Somewhere along the
7 line, the State decided that the EPC, the State
8 EPC, wasn't going to moderate or control them any
9 longer. It was going to be the Hillsborough County
10 EPC. So when they began to remove those coal ash
11 piles, there were strict directions on how it
12 should be done that I contacted the Hillsborough
13 County EPC, and you know what I got from them? A
14 sentence saying that they digitally monitoring the
15 progress.

16 What I am trying to get at is that long before
17 Emera took over, TECO has been disingenuous,
18 nontransparent. There was a scathing thesis done
19 by the USF law student back in 2015 that talked
20 about all the ways that TECO has gone to you to get
21 rate hikes and to pay the fines that they were
22 given, and you guys would a move approve them.

23 So I could go on and on about how egregious
24 the company, TECO, has been. Not a good player in
25 Tampa whatsoever, who -- in what world does our red

1 line front line community, Progress Village, and
2 you built a power -- a power plant directly
3 adjacent to it that's burning coal, and then now we
4 flipped over to frack gas.

5 No one wants to hear -- I have been here for
6 24 years, and nobody wants to hear how we did in
7 New York for 47 years before I got here, but I am
8 going to tell you something. NOCO got eviscerated
9 by the public opinion, and they turned into a
10 public/private corporation called LIPA, and LIPA in
11 the northeast in Long Island, of all places, is
12 going to be 70 percent wind and solar within six
13 years, and you want to know what TECO wants to do,
14 they want to hang on to 70 percent frack gas for
15 the next 30 freaking years, increasing their
16 consumption of frack gas as the years go by.

17 TECO is not a good player. Emera is not a
18 good player. They are continuing the same bad
19 habits. I am going to say -- give another example
20 about they are disingenuous.

21 Do you remember when the men died in the slag
22 room? Well, they must have paid a lot of
23 nondisclosure agreements, because the truth never
24 came out about what was happening there. One of
25 the statements that Emera came out with was that

1 they were independent contractors. Well, I have
2 somebody that worked for TECO for 30 freaking years
3 and knew everyone of those guys who could say if
4 they were independents, they were regular
5 independents that were in that slag room, and my
6 brother-in-law worked in that freaking slag room,
7 and you should have seen the look on his face when
8 those men died.

9 Now, I am telling you that TECO and Emera are
10 one of the worst players, the biggest polluters.
11 You want to know what the number one polluter in
12 Tampa is? It's TECO. Not transportation. TECO.
13 It's energy consumption.

14 So I am saying all of this stuff to say that
15 our Hillsborough County Board of County
16 Commissioners is in the pocket of TECO because of
17 their donations to their campaigns. And if you, as
18 a state board, can't come down here and protect us
19 citizens from the egregious acts of this miserable
20 freaking corporation that is just looking for more
21 profits.

22 Did you know that their pipes with the
23 turbines in them that go out into the bay, on two
24 occasions on close by, near hit hurricanes over the
25 past couple of years, the water was removed from

1 the bay, not pushed into the bay, and they were
2 within feet of being, sucking air, would have took
3 down the entire grid for the entire TECO plant, and
4 that was a faulty design by them.

5 Do you know what the power lines above the air
6 -- in the air overhead are? Faulty design. That's
7 not up to us to pay for faulty design from TECO's
8 -- TECO's mistakes which Emera -- it.

9 So thanks for listening to me. I have more
10 talking points to bring in person when I see you
11 soon. Thanks for letting me share.

12 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank, Mr. Coleman.

13 Next up is Candace Sammons, or Samons (sic).
14 Candace Sammons. I apologize if I am getting that
15 incorrect. Ms. Sammons, are you on the line? Not
16 hearing them, let's -- let's move to --

17 MS. PIACANTERI: Hello.

18 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Oh, Candace?

19 MS. PIACANTERI: Hi. I am going to speak on
20 behalf for Candace. My name is Joey Piacanteri
21 (ph). I live in the Brandon, Florida area. I
22 am --

23 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Before you get started --

24 MS. PIACANTERI: -- a resident of Florida --

25 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Ma'am, before you get

1 started, can you -- can you identify yourself one
2 more time just to make sure we hear it on the
3 record?

4 MS. PIACANTERI: Yes. Joey Piacanteri (ph).

5 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Okay. Now I am assuming
6 you have not been sworn in if you are speaking on
7 behalf of somebody else, so do you swear and affirm
8 that you will present the truth in this matter?

9 MS. PIACANTERI: Yes, sir.

10 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Okay. Please proceed.

11 MS. PIACANTERI: All right. I am a resident
12 of Brandon, Florida. I am here to really speak
13 about the hike. TECO's rate hike is extremely,
14 it's, at this point, unbearable. Like I heard the
15 Chairman or customer service saying that in the
16 near future, it's going to be, like, 260,000
17 houses. I mean, I guess, for TECO electricity. It
18 may be, but they are going to be empty houses,
19 because it's like, that rate hike is just -- it's
20 too high. I mean, why build now? The electricity
21 bills now are, like \$400 or \$500. Mortgage is
22 sometimes eight, maybe a thousand dollars. So
23 it's, like, half of -- half of your -- your
24 mortgage. And I just have feel like -- my concern
25 is that it's going to be more -- you see more

1 homeless people out than anything. So if they can
2 at least take that into consideration about the
3 increased rate hike, continuous rate hikes. I
4 mean, we -- we need electricity by far, but the
5 rate hikes, they are ridiculous.

6 That's pretty much all I wanted to mention.
7 Thank you.

8 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Okay. Thank you.

9 All right. Next up is Cedric Carrolls. My
10 records indicate that Cedric Carrolls has not been
11 sworn in, so when you are ready, please identify
12 yourself and I am going to just quickly swear you
13 in. Cedric Carrolls, are you there?

14 Not hearing, Mr. Ponce, I am going to throw it
15 back to you to identify the next three people.

16 MR. PONCE: The next three customers on the
17 list to give testimony are Justin Cantave,
18 Earnestine Frazier and Garnet Priest.

19 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Okay. Mr. Cantave, are you
20 available? You have also not been sworn in. Do
21 you mind identifying yourself before you get
22 started?

23 MR. CANTAVE: Yes, I am Justin Cantave.

24 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Okay. Sir, do you swear to
25 affirm that what you are presenting today is the

1 truth in this matter?

2 MR. CANTAVE: Yes, sir.

3 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Okay. Thank you. Go ahead
4 and proceed.

5 MR. CANTAVE: Okay. Yes, sir. I am Justin
6 Cantave. I live in the Terrace area.

7 The rate increase that TECO have is
8 unintelligent. We already have to work two jobs to
9 pay rent and lights from the last increase.
10 Another increase will put me and my family on the
11 street. Be careful the middle and lower class, you
12 guys will not increase the rate no more so we would
13 like to make a living and try to pay a tuition for
14 our kids, and try to better ourselves as a whole.
15 I mean, TECO already has most of our money in their
16 pocket. At least they can let us try to help
17 nurture our kids and make sure we have roof over
18 our head, somewhere to stay.

19 That's all I have to say, sir.

20 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you for your
21 testimony.

22 Earnestine Frazier. Earnestine Frazier, are
23 you on the line?

24 All right. Not hearing Earnestine, next up is
25 Garnet Priest. Garnet Priest, are you on the line?

1 Garnet Priest, are you on the line?

2 Okay. Not hearing them, Mr. Ponce, if you
3 want to recognize the next three individuals.

4 MR. PONCE: The next three customers offering
5 testimony are Marjorie Guevara, Paul Fosse, or
6 Fossie (sic), and Paulette Walker.

7 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Marjorie Guevara, are you
8 on the line?

9 MS. GUEVARA: Yes, I am.

10 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: You are recognized.

11 MS. GUEVARA: Okay.

12 (Multiple speakers.)

13 MS. GUEVARA: Oh, perfect.

14 Thank you so much for this opportunity to be
15 able to speak. I am calling on behalf of my
16 family. I just want to say that Mr. Coleman, just
17 really -- I am really new at this, and I am
18 learning so, so much, and it's really scary what
19 TECO is doing to our families, my family
20 specifically.

21 My mom is a cancer survivor and she is set up
22 here in this space that we, as Americans, do not
23 have universal health care, and that we are paying
24 high prices already for medicine, for food, for
25 housing. And now we have companies like TECO

1 raising our prices behind our backs. Most people
2 here in Hillsborough County don't know that this is
3 going on. Most people don't understand that.

4 I am personally looking at bills -- mom pays
5 absolutely all the bills in our house, and I am
6 seeing here that in May 22, 2018, our bill was
7 \$174.86. And right now, it is, for this month, it
8 went up to \$240. When in previous, we just see the
9 price gauging that we don't even realize because
10 it's little by little, but it's choking us out as a
11 community, as a family, as a parent.

12 My dad works over 40 hours to be able to even
13 put a roof over our heads, and he is doing this, he
14 is looking for ways to stop global warming, to stop
15 these ocean risings, to stop all the things. They
16 are trying to move and plant, and they're -- I am
17 not saying that's specifically wrong, but as a
18 company, I'm sure it has polluted, there is a lot
19 out into the atmosphere because our energy -- so
20 instead of trying to combat the damage that they've
21 done, instead of trying to deal with the
22 consequences of their actions, they are here
23 choking families in the Hillsborough County -- to
24 live.

25 I have a bill of over \$500 in their records,

1 in my parents' records because of people, the high
2 price -- these are recent prices. We have to leave
3 the AC at high, high temperatures, like, almost 80
4 during the day, and that is, like, super, super
5 scary for us that we have to take the dog out so
6 the bill doesn't come to \$500 or \$600 a week --
7 like, a month. It's super stressful to be able to
8 live a -- we are just like, we can't leave from
9 home and leave the dog behind. We have to take
10 everything with us. Like, hey, make sure the bread
11 and stuff is not out. Put everything in the fridge
12 because of TECO's price gauging, and it's really
13 affecting us as a family, as a community. I see it
14 all the time. And instead of trying to move away
15 from their problems, TECO should really take
16 responsibility and try to help with the climate
17 change.

18 Thank you.

19 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you for your
20 testimony.

21 Next up is Paul, is it Fosse? Paul Fosse.
22 Paul Fosse, are you on the line?

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: While we are waiting
24 for Paul, how do I register or get sworn in for
25 testimony?

1 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: At the end of the list, I
2 will ask if there is anybody that has not spoken.
3 At that point, you can just identify yourself and
4 we will ask you to be sworn in and just state your
5 name. So just hold tight, and we are actually only
6 -- I only got a few more folks up and we will ask
7 that question.

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I might be on the list
9 as well.

10 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Okay. Yeah. So there is
11 only about three more times names, so we will know
12 here shortly.

13 So Paul Fosse, I don't hear you on there. So
14 let's move to Paulette Walker. Paulette Walker,
15 are you on the line? Paulette Walker, are you on
16 the line?

17 Okay. Not hearing her either. Mr. Ponce, you
18 are recognized to identify the next, I believe,
19 only --

20 MR. PONCE: The final three customers offering
21 testimony are Alvaro Del Valle, Karen Michalski and
22 William Davis.

23 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: You got an extra one than I
24 do, but that's all right.

25 Alvaro Del Valle.

1 MR. DEL VALLE: Yeah, this is me. It looks
2 like I just called in right at the right time.

3 So my name is Alvaro Del Valle. Can you --
4 can you -- can everyone hear me okay?

5 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Yes, we can hear you.

6 MR. DEL VALLE: I live in New Tampa, and when
7 I heard about the rate increases -- I guess I will
8 keep this short and simple, is y'all have heard
9 about people not being able to afford it, and
10 that's true, especially nowadays.

11 I also did a little bit of research about my
12 bill, and what I don't like about the increase, and
13 don't support it, is the fact that you have a very
14 profitable company, they made, like, \$300 million
15 last year, and they are looking to make more money
16 from the general -- customer in order for some kind
17 of -- in solar regeneration -- and then such as,
18 you know, next year, 297 million next year, and the
19 following year 46 million.

20 So just inevitably, everyone but, you know,
21 things like this happen. From my standpoint, when
22 you have got a possible -- to cover costs by rate
23 increases, that just does not make since,
24 especially the amount of transparency that --

25 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: I think you finished up

1 there. You started to cut out there.

2 MR. DEL VALLE: -- but.

3 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Yeah, please continue.

4 MR. DEL VALLE: Go ahead.

5 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: No, you were just cutting
6 out there a little bit so we didn't know if you
7 were finished or not, but please continue.

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Try Zoom next time.
9 This is pitiful, pitiful tech you guys are using.

10 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: So I know you may have
11 comments, but I would appreciate if everyone could
12 just have the opportunity that we have called up to
13 speak at their time, and if you have not spoken, I
14 promise you will get an opportunity here at the
15 end.

16 So, Mr. Del Valle, if you want to finish up,
17 please do.

18 MR. DEL VALLE: Yes. Yes. Thank you. Thank
19 you.

20 Just, you know, in closing arguments, really,
21 the customers obviously are upset. Customers are
22 always carrying the brunt of increases, increases,
23 increases. My biggest thing is you have got a
24 company that is profitable. A company that made
25 \$320 million in 2023. For them to ask for almost a

1 full year's worth of profit, it's irresponsible, I
2 think, and that's my thought on it.

3 Thank you.

4 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you for your
5 testimony.

6 Next up is Karen Michalski. Karen Michalski.

7 Karen are you on the line?

8 Not hearing her, I think next up, I think, was
9 William Davis. I heard Mr. Ponce mention that
10 name. Not on my list, but is that what you have?

11 MR. PONCE: It's the last name on my list.

12 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Okay. Excellent.

13 So, Mr. Davis, are you on the line?

14 MR. DAVIS: Yes, sir, I am. Can you hear me?

15 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Yes. If you don't mind, I
16 am going to ask do you swear and affirm that you
17 will present the truth in this matter?

18 MR. DAVIS: Yes, sir, I do. I was sworn in
19 earlier by Ms. Kelly when she called me to schedule
20 it, but yes, I do.

21 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Okay. Excellent. Thank
22 you. Go ahead when you are ready.

23 MR. DAVIS: Yes, sir. Thank you,
24 Commissioners, for allowing me to speak, and I
25 appreciate your service.

1 I believe that I am definitely the minority
2 tonight. As stated, my name is William Davis. I
3 am 70 years old. I have been a TECO customer my
4 entire adult life, which is over 50 years. I live
5 in eastern Hillsborough County in Plant City,
6 Florida.

7 I believe that TECO's quality of service is
8 excellent. I very, very rarely have any
9 interruption in my power, and when I do, it's
10 usually only a flicker, only lasting a couple of
11 minutes until it's reset. I am very much in favor
12 and support TECO's request for a rate increase.

13 As Ms. Sparkman stated at the very beginning,
14 TECO, just like every one of us, has been affected
15 by inflation. I previously, for my background,
16 spent 32 years with the Hillsborough County
17 Sheriff's Office, retiring as a district major. I
18 say that to not hide the fact that I worked very
19 closely with TECO during storm preparation and
20 storm restorations, and found them to be a very
21 responsive company, and very responsive to the
22 customer needs. They seem to always put their
23 customers first.

24 I have witnessed firsthand their line clearing
25 program. As I said, I live in Plant City, Florida.

1 I also see their tree trimmers out here trimming
2 the power lines behind my home and all a long roads
3 like Trapnell Road that feed my subdivision. I am
4 sure this is greatly improving outages during
5 storms.

6 I have also personally witnessed them
7 replacing many overhead lines in the Plant City
8 area and underground wires, again, making their
9 service more reliable.

10 I witnessed a huge amount of solar farms being
11 constructed in eastern Hillsborough County, outside
12 County Line Road and State Road 60, again,
13 obviously adding to clean energy.

14 Finally, I have witnessed firsthand how TECO
15 has partnered with organizations in the community
16 such as the East Hillsborough Law Enforcement
17 Appreciation Association, which I serve as one of
18 their directors. That's an organization which
19 annually organizes law enforcement officers from
20 the Florida Highway Patrol, Plant City Police
21 Department, Hillsborough County Sheriffs Office and
22 Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission. And
23 TECO has been a great partner with us in that event
24 and, again, just showing their total commitment and
25 support to the community.

1 I could go on more and tell you more about my
2 background at a previous company called GTE,
3 General Telephone Company, they later became
4 Verizon, how they did not care about their customer
5 needs, and about how I actually investigated Public
6 Service Commission complaints when I was an
7 installer repairman at the phone company before
8 going to the Sheriff's Office.

9 So again, I commend TECO in their efforts, and
10 thank you very much for your time allowing me to
11 speak at tonight's hearing.

12 Thank you, Chair.

13 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you, Mr. Davis, both
14 for your service and your testimony today.

15 Is there anybody on -- anybody else on the
16 line that has not had an opportunity to speak?
17 Anybody on the line that has not had an
18 opportunity? I know there is one gentleman that
19 was looking to speak. Are you still there?

20 MS. GONZALEZ: My name is Vilega Gonzalez
21 (ph).

22 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: All right. Go ahead and
23 identify your name so we can get it for the record,
24 and then I am going to ask you to be sworn in.

25 MS. GONZALEZ: Hello. It's Vilega Gonzalez.

1 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Okay. Do you swear and
2 affirm that you will presents the truth in this
3 matter?

4 MS. GONZALEZ: Yes.

5 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Please go ahead. You are
6 recognized.

7 MS. GONZALEZ: Hi. So hello, my name is
8 Vilega. I am currently a resident in South Tampa,
9 or Port Tampa.

10 My message that I am trying to get across to
11 you guys today is just that another rate hike won't
12 do nothing but to continue to, you know, negatively
13 impact not just me, but our community as a whole.
14 I am only 19. As soon as I got out of school, I
15 had to be able to pay and help my mom pay her
16 bills, pay the light bill. That was the first
17 Billy had to pay, and I personally saw how it went
18 from 125, all the way up to, like, \$500 in, like, a
19 six-month time period. And that was, like, even
20 for me working at a fast food restaurant.

21 I have managed to get into the medical field,
22 but I'm struggling because of the rate hikes keep
23 continuing. I had to drop out of school and get
24 another job to be able to help pay for bills. And
25 even then, just with my two jobs, sometimes it's

1 hard for me to even be able to afford
2 transportation, or even just having food at home so
3 I can cook.

4 So, yeah, I just really hope you guys don't go
5 through with it, because it's not just me. Like I
6 say, you are affecting the community, people with
7 children, elderly, people who can't work for
8 themselves, or people who have to come back out of
9 retirement just to work so they can be able to
10 afford to keep their lights on at a home that they
11 own.

12 I am sorry, that's all for my message.

13 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you for your
14 testimony today.

15 Is there anybody else on the line that has not
16 had a chance to speak? Anybody else on the line?
17 Last chance, anybody that has not had a chance to
18 speak today?

19 Okay. Well, I just want to say thank you to
20 all those who have called in, and we really
21 appreciate, again, the stories, the thoughts, the
22 process and what you are experiencing.

23 I am going to ahead and look over to TECO, and
24 just recognize, I believe that you had some
25 exhibits that you wanted to enter.

1 MR. MEANS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's
2 just one exhibit, as I mentioned, it's out our
3 composite notice exhibit that we filed in the
4 docket Friday. And since the court reporter is not
5 in the room here with us, I would propose that I
6 could just email it to her --

7 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Okay.

8 MR. MEANS: -- and then she can enter into the
9 record that way.

10 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Okay. That makes sense,
11 and then I don't need to do anything official here
12 tonight.

13 MR. MEANS: Thank you.

14 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Perfect. Awesome.

15 Thank you. I will look to the parties, yes,
16 Mr. Ponce.

17 MR. PONCE: I just have one quick thing.

18 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Sure.

19 MR. PONCE: The second customer who called had
20 mentioned that she was having service issues.
21 Unfortunately I didn't have a chance to drop in and
22 ask her to elaborate further, but I am wondering if
23 this is something that maybe the staff could follow
24 up on, or if this could be reported on further?

25 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: When you say the second

1 person, that's Krystal Pate that's on the list?

2 MR. PONCE: That's right.

3 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Could -- I am going to -- I
4 am going to look to staff.

5 Ms. Pate, you don't happen to be on the line,
6 are you?

7 MS. PATE: I am on the line.

8 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Okay. Mr. Ponce, would you
9 like for her to offer her testimony?

10 MR. PONCE: If she's willing to.

11 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Yeah.

12 Ms. Pate, if you are willing to -- apparently
13 there was maybe some confusion and we didn't hear
14 directly from you? I thought we did.

15 MS. PATE: You said Krystal Pate. I already
16 spoke.

17 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Okay. Yes.

18 MR. PONCE: I just had some quick questions if
19 she's willing to --

20 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Okay, yeah. Go ahead.

21 BY MR. PONCE:

22 **Q Ms. Pate, did you mention that you had some**
23 **service issues?**

24 A Yes, I had some service issues. I mean,
25 issues.

1 **Q When was -- did you report these issues to**
2 **TECO?**

3 A Yes. Yes, I have.

4 **Q What was the outcome of these reports?**

5 A I did not get no reply at all. And also, I
6 did do an article about the high electric bills, and
7 someone from TECO contacted me, because the article came
8 out, and said that they was going to assist and help me
9 with the light bill but they never followed through with
10 it.

11 **Q So someone -- so after TECO reached out, you**
12 **never got any further assistance?**

13 A No. I got a call from a young lady stating
14 that her supervisor wanted her to give me a call to see
15 how she could help me with the high light bills, but
16 they never called me back. I got the one phone call and
17 that's it. I called TECO back, and it was as if no one
18 ever reached out to me.

19 **Q And since then, you still have not heard back**
20 **from TECO?**

21 A I have not heard back from TECO.

22 **Q Okay. Well, I represent the Office of Public**
23 **Counsel. If you would like to give us a call about it,**
24 **we would be happy to take it. Our phone number here, if**
25 **you are ready, I can give it to you.**

1 A Okay.

2 Q Our phone number here is 85 --

3 A I'm ready.

4 Q Our phone number here is (850)488-9330.

5 Again, that was (850)488-9330. And you should -- if you
6 haven't already, I would also -- you may want to file an
7 official complaint with the PSC as well.

8 A Okay. Yes, sir. And I'm just going to repeat
9 that phone number back. (850)844-9330?

10 MR. MEANS: And, Mr. Chairman, we would like
11 to encourage Ms. Pate to reach out to the company.
12 Ms. Sparkman can provide the number again, and we
13 will get with her tonight.

14 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Ms. Pate, you are going to
15 hear here in a second from TECO. They are going to
16 provide you a phone number in which you can -- you
17 can call in, and your information is also available
18 here in front of them, but I am going to look back
19 to TECO.

20 Go ahead, you are recognized.

21 MS. SPARKMAN: Ms. Pate, please give us a
22 call --

23 MS. PATE: I understand.

24 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Go ahead.

25 MS. SPARKMAN: Please give us a call at

1 1(888)223-0800. We have someone on standby
2 prepared to take your call.

3 MS. PATE: All right. Could you give me that
4 number again? 1(888).

5 MS. SPARKMAN: Certainly. 1(888)223-0800.

6 MS. PATE: Okay.

7 MR. PONCE: You may want to give a report
8 to --

9 MS. PATE: Is that it.

10 MR. PONCE: You may want to give a report to
11 the Commission staff as well. I believe their
12 number is (850)413-6199. That is to give a report
13 to the Public Service Commission staff as well.

14 MS. PATE: Yes, sir. Thank you.

15 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Ms. Pate, we may not be
16 done with you. I'm going to -- okay. I think we
17 are. Thank you very much for calling in, and we
18 hope that that information helps.

19 I don't hear any other customers that have not
20 had a chance to speak, so I'm going to --

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I think we do have one
22 more.

23 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Okay.

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Excuse me, sir. I am
25 sorry. We do have one more customer that needs to

1 speak.

2 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Okay. If you don't mind,
3 please identify yourself and I just have to swear
4 you in.

5 MS. HOLTON: Hello, my name is Dimitria
6 Holton.

7 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Ms. Holton, do you swear
8 and affirm that you will be presenting the truth in
9 this matter today?

10 MS. HOLTON: Yes, I do.

11 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Go ahead, you are
12 recognized.

13 MS. HOLTON: Yes. Hello, Dimitria Holton. I
14 am a resident in Brandon. Of course, I am not
15 happy with the TECO increase with the insulation
16 already high and an increase on rent, groceries and
17 already necessities just to live, another increase
18 won't help me or Florida residents.

19 Also, if there is an increase, it always seems
20 that TECO never lets us know specifically why the
21 increase. They never send out letters. They never
22 let us know what's going on regarding that
23 increase. So I would like to know if there is an
24 increase, where will our money be going?

25 Also, maybe you can look into having a fixed

1 rate regarding our bills. That will help the
2 residents.

3 That's pretty much it, but I would definitely
4 like if you guys can help us out. Again, if there
5 is an increase, of course let the residents know
6 why the increase, but also look into it having a
7 fixed rate.

8 That's it.

9 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Ms. Holton, thank you for
10 your testimony today.

11 Okay. I am going to try one more time --

12 MS. HOLTON: Thank you so much.

13 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: -- any further customers?

14 Okay. Seeing none.

15 MS. HOLTON: That's it.

16 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Okay. Great. Thank you.

17 Hearing -- hearing no further customers, that
18 will conclude our customer portion.

19 I am just going to kind of clean up a little
20 bit of loose ends and some business, so I am going
21 to go to Mr. Marshall, you are recognized.

22 MR. MARSHALL: Mr. Chairman, we had a question
23 for Mr. William Davis if he was still on the line.

24 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Mr. Davis.

25 MR. DAVIS: Yes, sir, I am.

1 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: I believe the last person
2 that spoke, yes.

3 MR. MARSHALL: Thank you.

4 BY MR. MARSHALL:

5 Q Are you currently employed as the Manager of
6 Ethics and Compliance for TECO?

7 A I am not. I previously was employed at TECO,
8 and retired in January of '23.

9 Q Great. Thank you.

10 CHAIRMAN LA ROSA: Thank you.

11 Okay. Parties, any -- any further business?

12 Commissioners, any questions or any further
13 business before us today?

14 Seeing none, again, I thank all that have
15 participated. Of course, this week will be a busy
16 week as we continue additional service hearings.
17 For the time being, that will conclude our service
18 hearing for this evening. Thank you all.

19 (Proceedings concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER


STATE OF FLORIDA)
COUNTY OF LEON)

I, DEBRA KRICK, Court Reporter, do hereby
certify that the foregoing proceeding was heard at the
time and place herein stated.

IT IS FURTHER CERTIFIED that I
stenographically reported the said proceedings; that the
same has been transcribed under my direct supervision;
and that this transcript constitutes a true
transcription of my notes of said proceedings.

I FURTHER CERTIFY that I am not a relative,
employee, attorney or counsel of any of the parties, nor
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attorney or counsel connected with the action, nor am I
financially interested in the action.

DATED this 24th day of June, 2024.


DEBRA R. KRICK
NOTARY PUBLIC
COMMISSION #HH31926
EXPIRES AUGUST 13, 2024