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ATTORNEY GENERAL MADIGAN, CONSUMER ADVOCATES: VOTE 'NO' TO AUTOMATIC RATE HIKES ON ILLINOIS UTILITY BILLS

Chicago—Attorney General Lisa Madigan and a coalition of consumer advocates today voiced their opposition to a legislative proposal that would impose automatic annual rate hikes on millions of consumers' utility bills.

The bill as currently introduced by State Rep. Kevin McCarthy (HB 14) would eliminate the long-standing utility rate review process through the ICC and allow utility companies to impose automatic rate increases for 10 years. Attorney General Madigan, AARP, the Citizens Utility Board and many consumer and environmental advocates, including Citizen Action, the Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law, the Latino Organization of the Southwest, South Austin Coalition and the Environmental Law and Policy Center, came together at the Austin Senior Center on Chicago's West Side to announce their opposition to the measure and to encourage local residents to contact their legislators to vote no on the utility bill.

"ComEd is trying to ram a bill through the Legislature that will guarantee increased profits by increasing rates paid by consumers," Attorney General Madigan said.

"We don't want consumers to be fooled into thinking that House Bill 14 is about smart grids," said Bob Gallo, AARP Illinois Senior State Director. "House Bill 14 is about higher rates and bolstered corporate profit margins. It is a wolf in sheep's clothing."

"As it stands right now, the ComEd proposal would increase gas and electric rates for consumers by untold amounts for the purpose of guaranteeing utility company profits of over 10 percent," Barry Matchett, Co-Legislative Director of the Environmental Law and Policy Center said. "That is not fair."

The legislation would significantly weaken the long-standing, balanced regulatory system, leaving millions of residential and business consumers with a limited voice in the approval process. The bill allows for future rate increase requests to go through a "fast track" review process as opposed to the current review process, which allows for a more thorough investigation.

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