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Subject: Action Alert! Oppose the Duke Energy Rate Hike  
To:

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## Duke Energy Customers: Oppose the Rate Hike! Make Your Voices Heard!

Attend and testify at a public hearing to oppose the proposed Duke Energy rate hike in the Upstate and the Pee Dee. LWVSC opposes this rate increase as

- excessive,
- unfairly distributed, and
- discouraging to energy conservation by consumers.

Five public hearings will be held. Please plan to testify at the hearing nearest you. You will have up to three minutes to speak. Identify yourself as a Duke customer, which gives you standing, and state your concerns.

See dates and locations, talking points, and fuller background information below.

### **Public Hearings Times and Locations:**

The Public Service Commission, which has the authority to set rates, is holding

hearings in the upstate and the Pee Dee at the following times and locations:

**Tuesday, March 12, 2019, 6:00 pm, Spartanburg County Council**

**Chambers**, Spartanburg County Administration Building, 366 N Church Street, Main Level, Suite 1000, Spartanburg, South Carolina 29303

**Wednesday, March 13, 2019, 6:00 pm, Anderson County Council**

**Chambers**, 101 S Main Street, Anderson, South Carolina 29624

**Thursday, March 14, 2019, 6:00 pm Greenville County Council Chambers,**

301 University Ridge, Suite 2400, Greenville, South Carolina 29601

**Monday, April 1, 2019, 6:00 pm, Florence County Council Chambers, 180**

N. Irby Street, MSC-G, Florence, South Carolina 29501

**Tuesday, April 2, 2019, 6:00 pm, USC Sumter – Nettles Auditorium, 200**

Miller Road, Sumter, South Carolina 29150

**Key Talking Points:**

1. The proposed change amounts to a 237.8% increase in the flat rate.
2. The flat rate is paid by each customer, even if no electricity is used -- so conserving energy will have little impact on monthly bills.
3. The proposed increase would have an especially large impact on low income households in SC, who already spend an average of 9% of their income on electricity. (More than 3% is considered an unaffordable electric rate.)

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The LWV of South Carolina considers this a good government issue because regulating monopolies is an important role for state government in protecting consumers and the environment.

In the upstate, the proposed increase in the flat rate charged to all residential customers is from \$8.29 to \$28 per month starting June 1<sup>st</sup>, rising to \$28.59 in 2020 and 2021. This represents a 237.8% increase, the highest requested by any of the publicly traded electric utilities in the nation. For the Pee Dee, the proposed change in the base rate is from \$9.06 to \$29 in 2019 and \$29.86 in 2020 and 2021. The base rate in South Carolina would also be the highest base rate in the nation for investor-owned utilities. The base rate is a flat charge that does not depend on electricity use. Even if you consume no electricity, you still pay that amount. The rate per kilowatt hour will be reduced slightly, less than 3 percent, in both the upstate and the Pee Dee.

This rate hike is structured in a way that will have disproportionate impact on low income households. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, 50 percent of South Carolina residents have unaffordable electric rates (more than three percent of income) and low-income residents (defined as less than 80 percent of median income) spend an average of nine percent of their

income on electricity. When other energy costs are factored in (natural gas, kerosene, etc.), South Carolina's low-income residents spend an average of 14 percent of their income on energy. Trying to conserve energy won't help their bills much, because the bulk of the bill will be the fixed charge, and the cost per kilowatt hour is actually being slightly reduced.

If you are a Duke customer in one of these areas, you have standing to testify on the rate hike. **Testimony about hardships to low income families are particularly important.** If you are a low income family, or you work with or have friends and neighbors, stories about the impact of this rate hike on their budgets will be particularly important. We need to ask why one of the poorest states in the nation is being burdened with some of the highest electric rates. The largest share of Duke's proposed revenue increase comes from households, and disproportionately from low income households through the base rate increase.

Please plan to testify at the hearing nearest you. You will have up to three minutes to speak. Identify yourself as a Duke customer, which gives you standing, and state your concerns.



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