PUC stumps for BPA rate hike remedy

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Commission Asks Congressional Delegation for Resolution; and Joins other Commissions Seeking Legal Review

SALEM, Ore. â€“The Oregon Public Utility Commission (PUC) is asking Oregonâ€™s Congressional delegation to provide interim relief to the 1.2 million Oregon households and small farm customers that are getting hit with an unexpected 13% rate hike due to a wide reaching Federal Appeals court ruling. At the same time, the Oregon PUC also joined the Washington, Idaho and Montana Utility Commissions to strongly urge the Justice Department to give Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) permission to seek reconsideration of the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals ruling that led to the suspension of the benefits, saying the proceeding involves a question of exceptional importance. â€œWhen we reluctantly raised customersâ€™ rates this week due to the cutoff of BPA benefits, we also made a commitment to do everything within our power to restore the benefits customers are entitled to,â€• Commission Chairman Lee Beyer said. â€œWe are optimistic our Congressional delegation will see how serious this issue is and we strongly urge them to get involved in crafting solutions. Each day that passes without relief costs Oregon customers $351,000.â€• In a letter to the delegation, the Commission requested legislative action to restore residential exchange benefits through a legislative rider for Fiscal Year 2008, a halt to action on the â€œRegional Dialogueâ€• until the customer benefit issue is resolved and requested that the BPA take a second look at its formula distributes benefits throughout the region. â€œOregon has a great financial stake in the distribution of benefits from our regional power system. Three out of four households in Oregon are served by private utilities. They deserve no less than full and fair access to low-cost federal power,â€• the Commission said in its letter to Oregonâ€™s delegation.

A typical PGE residential bill will go up by $10.66 a month. A typical PacifiCorp residential customer bill will increase by $9.62 a month. Customers of Idaho Power will see rates rise by 6%, or by $6.54 a month.