



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
Hon. Stephanie A. Miner, Mayor

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
DATE: July 31, 2017

CONTACT: Alexander Marion
Press Secretary (315) 448-8044

**MAYOR MINER, COMMON COUNCILORS URGE PSC TO
REJECT PROPOSED NATIONAL GRID RATE HIKES**

*In Joint Letter to the PSC, City Leaders Reveal Increased National Grid Rates
Would Cost City More Than \$750,000 In the First Year Alone*

*Households Below Poverty Line Spend More than 25% of their Income on Utility
Bills, While Proposed Rate Increases Could Add More than \$180 To Average
User's Bill*

SYRACUSE, N.Y. – Mayor Stephanie A. Miner and the Syracuse Common Council today issued a letter to the Public Service Commission (PSC) urging them to reject National Grid's proposed rate hikes. These expensive increases would increase the average household's utility bill more than \$180 and the city's utility bill by more than \$750,000 in the first year alone. The joint letter was submitted in advance of a public hearing happening tonight at Nottingham High School in Syracuse.

"Utility customers in Syracuse simply cannot afford these significant rate hikes. The PSC must reject the rate increases as proposed and put customers first," said **Syracuse Mayor Stephanie A. Miner**. "The city and its residents should not be burdened with these

"National Grid ratepayers are struggling to make ends meet and simply cannot afford the additional burden of these charges," said **Steven P. Thompson**, Common Council Majority Leader. "The city of Syracuse has serious financial challenges and we need relief, not increased utility bills. On behalf of my colleagues in the Council, we urge the PSC to reject these outrageous rate hikes."

The joint letter was submitted to the PSC today as part of the public comment period on a proposed rate hike for National Grid in excess of \$300 million. The letter highlights the fact that a Onondaga County households spend more than \$1,800 per year on utility bills and homes in the community that are below 50% of the federal poverty level spend more than 25% of their annual income on utility bills. The inability to pay utility bills is the second leading cause of homelessness in the United States, according to a 2007 study by the University of Colorado also cited in the letter.



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The city of Syracuse would see its own utility bills increase more than \$750,000 in the first year of the proposed rate hike alone due to increased tariff and delivery charges for streetlights and also natural gas delivery charges.

The city leaders full letter appears below.

July 31, 2017

Hon. Kathleen H. Burgess, Secretary to the Commission
New York State Public Service Commission
Empire State Plaza
Agency Building 3
Albany, New York 12223-1350

Dear Ms. Burgess:

On behalf of the nearly 145,000 residents of the city of Syracuse, we are writing to strongly oppose the proposed rate increase requested by National Grid. As one of the lowest-income communities in the United States, this will put an undue burden on city ratepayers. It also represents a dramatic increase in costs to the city administration during times where Syracuse, like other cities across New York State, are experiencing financial hardship.

Syracuse is the twenty-third poorest city in the United States. One out of every two children are born into poverty and the median household income is just \$31,000. More than 30% of city households are eligible for federal SNAP benefits and 30 census tracts are characterized as being in "extreme poverty," with more than 40% of residents living below the poverty line. These are not just statistics to city leaders, but this represents our neighbors and our constituents who are struggling to make ends meet, let alone pay for rising energy costs.

According to research reported last year by [The Atlantic](#), Onondaga County households spend more than \$1,800 every year on energy bills. For homes below 50% of the federal poverty level in this community, that is more than 25% of their annual income. This proposed rate increase will increase that burden by an average of \$180 per year. And, recent reporting from [Syracuse.com](#) showed that National Grid shut off power to more than 66,000 Upstate New York ratepayers in 2015 and 2016 for nonpayment. A 2007 study by the University of Colorado, reported by [Inside Energy](#), showed that the second leading cause of homelessness is the inability to pay utility bills.

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This proposal will also have a serious impact on the city as a ratepayer. After performing an internal analysis, proposed increases in tariff and delivery charges for street lighting, as well as an increase in natural gas delivery charges, the city of Syracuse will see an increase in its utility bill of more than \$750,000 in the first year alone. In a year where we have adopted one of the leanest budgets in decades, this increase will put a significant burden on the city going forward. Tough choices will need to be made between paying this bill and providing the litany of services our residents require. Staff from the administration will be supplying expanded comments on this soon, detailing the impacts on the city as a ratepayer.

On behalf of the city of Syracuse, we urge the Public Service Commission to oppose this proposed rate increase. It will be a burdensome expense the ratepayers and taxpayers simply cannot afford.

Sincerely,

Stephanie A. Miner
Mayor

Van Robinson
Council President

Steven P. Thompson
Councilor – at – Large
Majority Leader

Helen Hudson
Councilor – at – Large

Jean Kessner
Councilor – at – Large

Joseph Nicoletti
Councilor – at – Large

Joseph Carni
First District Councilor
Minority Leader

Chad Ryan
Second District Councilor

Susan Boyle
Third District Councilor

Khalid Bey
Fourth District Councilor

Nader P. Maroun
Fifth District Councilor

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