

Ohio Partners for Affordable Energy

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For Immediate Release

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OPAE RELEASES ELECTRIC REREGULATION PLAN Plan Focuses on Needs of Small Customers

FINDLAY (August 24, 2007) – Ohio Partners for Affordable Energy (OPAE), an organization of sixty nonprofits serving consumers throughout the state, have released a plan to ensure just and reasonable utility rates. The community action agencies and other nonprofits that make up OPAE's membership provide a broad array of social services, from Head Start to senior nutrition programs. Agencies also provide weatherization and energy conservation services as well as utility bill payment assistance.

“Electric rates are spiraling out of control,” said John Sarver, of Cleveland Housing Network and OPAE Board Chair. “Residential customers, especially low income customers can't afford it; small businesses can't afford it; and, large commercial and industrial customers can't afford it. Bottom line – Ohio can't afford it.”

“Ohio needs to take advantage of cost-effective energy efficiency,” added Jim Tehnundfeld, an energy auditor and OPAE Vice Chair. “We also need to use Ohio-based renewable power. Ohioans need clean air and protection from the risk of global warming – renewables and efficiency meet both needs.”

The OPAE plan calls for:

- Regulation of every aspect of utility service to ensure just and reasonable rates which are in the public interest.
- A least cost planning process to develop supply and demand side strategies to provide service at the lowest possible cost.

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- Minimum requirements for the use of energy conservation and renewable energy to meet customers' need for energy services.
- Requirements that rates not shift responsibility for costs from large customers to small customers and *vice versa*.
- Requirements that rates for low income customers are affordable and that payment plans for residential and small commercial customers are fair.
- Creation of an Ohio Energy Authority to purchase, build, or finance new generation and energy efficiency investments, and provide those services to customers at cost.
- Enhanced reliability through training standards, mandatory staffing levels, and investment in the distribution system, including provisions to encourage distributed generation and net metering technologies.
- Utilities to be permitted a reasonable profit. Utility finances will be reviewed annually to protect against excessive rates. If rates are too high, the Commission is required to initiate a rate proceeding to lower rates.
- Establishing tough appliance efficiency standards.
- Making Energy Star® certified appliances exempt from sales tax.

“Customers pay for everything when it comes to utility service,” noted Dave Rinebolt, OPAE Executive Director. “If we are paying, then we ought to be able to get what we need – affordable rates, energy efficiency, renewable energy, and reliability. This state’s economy is foundering. Ohio’s utilities need to step up to the plate and share in the effort to create more jobs and promote business development – after all, their business is only as good as our economy and they can’t roll up their wires and leave. Energy efficiency and renewables will produce jobs. That’s where ratepayers money should be invested, not in obscene shareholder profits and obsolete powerplants.”

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