

Protect Our Needy Neighbors from Soaring Utility Costs - Illinois Only: A Message from Susan Wiland

Illinois families are facing unprecedented increases in electricity and gas bills. These rising costs are largely driven by the increased demand from data centers that support the growing needs of artificial intelligence, which require significant amounts of energy. Unfortunately, these additional expenses are being passed on to seniors, families, and our needy neighbors—especially those on fixed incomes—making it increasingly difficult for them to manage basic household expenses. These needy residential customers are bearing the burden of soaring utility costs, even though they are not responsible for the increased demand that has produced these rising costs. The current pricing structure is inequitable.

Recent utility bill hikes have been dramatic and deeply concerning. In June 2025, ComEd's billing rates rose by about 20%. Ameren customers saw their bills increase by 18–22%, resulting in an average monthly increase of \$45. In Chicago, Peoples Gas rates increased by a staggering 97% in just one year, while Nicor Gas and North Shore Gas rates went up by 59% and 55%, respectively. For many Illinois residents, these surges in utility costs are creating severe financial strain and forcing them to make difficult choices about how to allocate limited resources.

Proposed Solutions:

- **Two-Tier Pricing:** Implement a separate utility rate structure to differentiate data centers and other large-scale commercial users from residential customers. This approach ensures that such large-scale commercial users equitably bear the economic burden of increased utility costs, rather than shifting these costs onto families and individuals who did not create this demand.

Increase Funding for Assistance Programs: Expand funding for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) and other hardship relief initiatives, ensuring that more families can access the support they need to pay their utility bills.

Please contact Governor Pritzker and your Illinois State Senators and Representatives to advocate for the adoption of a two-tier utility rate structure that reflects fairness and equity and increased funding for LIHEAP.

For more information, we have created the **Illinois Utility Fairness Campaign** website.