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## **Advocates Urge Austin City Council to Continue Green Power Legacy as Rate Hike Request Moves Forward**

*Sierra Club, Public Citizen, and Solar United Neighbors Will Argue Against Utility's Proposal at Monday's EUC Public Hearing*

**AUSTIN, Texas** — Following Friday's independent recommendation on Austin Energy's proposed rate hike, three conservation groups will again object to the proposal at today's Electric Utility Commission meeting.

**At the 5:30 p.m. hearing at Austin Energy headquarters**, attorneys representing **Sierra Club, Public Citizen, and Solar United Neighbors** will argue before the commission that Austin Energy's proposal is a step backward in the city's efforts to adopt environment-friendly policies and to keep bills affordable

The City Council will hold public hearings and is expected to make a decision on any potential rate hike in November.

"Proposed changes to the Austin Energy rates threaten to roll back more than a decade of progress toward sustainability," said Kaiba White, energy policy and outreach specialist for Public Citizen. "Austin City Council members should keep the policy goals of encouraging energy conservation, customer-sited solar, and ending dependence on coal at the forefront as they consider Austin Energy's proposals. This is the time for bold action, not backsliding."

As a standard part of the utility rate process, an independent hearing examiner issued an order last Friday agreeing with the three groups that Austin Energy's proposal could shock some residential customers, especially those who are low-income, and could undermine historic efforts to incentivize energy conservation.

Austin Energy's proposal is a radical restructuring of its rates. If approved, it would not only raise the fixed customer fee from \$10 to \$25 each month but would also overhaul

its current tiered rate structure, raising rates for customers who consume the least energy and lowering them for those who consume more.

The conservation groups will disagree with several of the examiner's findings, including that Austin Energy's proposed new Value of Solar rate is reasonable. The Value of Solar is an alternative to net metering intended to credit solar users for the energy they put back on the electric grid.

The groups will also disagree with the examiner's finding that it is reasonable for Austin Energy to recover costs associated with the Fayette coal plant from ratepayers. City Council has ordered the utility to stop burning coal by the end of the year, and the utility has offered no evidence demonstrating that the costs are reasonable.

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*Sierra Club is America's largest and oldest grassroots environmental organization, with more than 3 million members and supporters.*

*Public Citizen is a national, nonprofit consumer advocacy organization based in Washington, D.C., with an office in Austin, Texas.*

*Solar United Neighbors is a nonprofit organization that works in Texas and nationwide to represent the needs and interests of solar owners and supporters.*