

1 CHAIRWOMAN ZALEWSKI: Under the Open
2 Meetings Act and in accordance with the Governor's
3 Executive Orders, I call the April 9, 2021, Special
4 Open Meeting to order.

5 Before we proceed, for clarity of
6 the record, I would ask everyone to state their
7 name before speaking and to speak slowly and
8 clearly so that the court reporter can capture
9 everything that is said.

10 I already checked that all four
11 commissioners are with us. We have a quorum.

12 We have one request to speak from
13 Benjamin Theobald. Under 2 Illinois Administrative
14 Code Section 1700.10, any person desiring to
15 address the Commission shall be allowed up to three
16 minutes. Only one person may speak on behalf of
17 the organization. Please note that the Commission
18 will not respond directly to any comments.

19 Any person wishing to provide any
20 further comments may submit a written statement to
21 the Commission. The written comments may be
22 submitted by going to the ICC website,

1 ICC.Illinois.gov. Go to the e-Docket systems and
2 look under the docket, for this case, 20-0309, and
3 in that docket, click the "File a Comment" link.
4 You can also call the ICC consumer services
5 division at (800) 524-0795 and they will help you
6 submit a comment.

7 Mr. Benjamin Theobald, are you on?

8 MR. THEOBALD: Yes. I should be here.

9 CHAIRWOMAN ZALEWSKI: Great. So, sir, you
10 have three minutes. And my policy advisor, Tanya
11 Rabczak, has put up the timer. So once you state
12 and spell your name, she will begin the timer.

13 MR. THEOBALD: Okay. Hello, my name is
14 Benjamin Theobald. I'll spell that.
15 B-E-N-J-A-M-I-N, last name Theobald,
16 T-H-E-O-B-A-L-D. I am speaking as a member of the
17 Champaign-Urbana Democratic Socialists of America.
18 I reside in Urbana, Illinois.

19 I am speaking today to ask you, to
20 request, that the statewide moratorium be put back
21 in place, and be extended for at least a few more
22 months. Unfortunately, right now, we are still in

1 a crisis a year after this pandemic.

2 Shutoffs are slated to start as
3 early as April 14. If there was a time to act
4 right now, it would be as soon as possible, if not
5 right now. The CDC Director, Rochelle Walensky has
6 signed an extension to the eviction moratorium now
7 through June 30 because "Keeping people in their
8 homes and out of congregate settings is a key step
9 in helping to stop the spread of COVID-19."

10 Recent cases of COVID-19, here in
11 the state of Illinois -- yesterday it was over
12 3,000, specifically 3,930. April 7, it was 3,693,
13 and April 6, it was 2,964, and April 5, it was over
14 2300. And this is about the same number of COVID
15 cases there was the first week of last October,
16 where the numbers kept rising throughout the month
17 and into November and Illinois was, eventually, the
18 leading number of COVID cases during that time,
19 throughout the nation.

20 And keep in mind, this is the B117
21 variant of the COVID-19 virus.

22 On March 25, the Attorney General,

1 Kwame Raoul, said that utility costs had become
2 unsustainable for many Illinois households,
3 particularly as individuals, as families continue
4 to struggle due to the COVID -- financial impacts
5 of the COVID-19 pandemic. He said that over
6 800,000 ratepayers, I repeat, 800,000 ratepayers,
7 have utility -- and are potentially subject to
8 having their services cut off. And keep in mind,
9 in the U.S. census, Illinois households average 2.5
10 persons.

11 So this is possibly, at least, 1.5
12 million people who are facing having their
13 utilities cut off, such things such as water. And
14 unfortunately, these are -- a disproportionate
15 number of these households are located in
16 predominantly minority communities. According to
17 the economic research, the National Bureau of
18 Economic Research, customers in black and Hispanic
19 ZIP Codes are four times more likely to be
20 disconnected for nonpayment.

21 This past Monday, the City of
22 Urbana unanimously passed a resolution declaring

1 continued disconnections in Illinois to be a
2 pandemic safety risk, to the community, as a whole,
3 with the recommendation of approval in their next
4 city's council meeting.

5 So I ask you all today, to please
6 -- if you worked at a -- if you -- to extend the
7 moratorium, put people over profits. Thank you
8 very much.

9 CHAIRWOMAN ZALEWSKI: Thank you. This
10 concludes our public comment section.

11 So we're going to move on to our
12 agenda. We have two items on our agenda today.
13 Item 1 is the approval of the March 18, 2021,
14 Regular Open Meeting Minutes. There are edits to
15 the minutes. Are there any objections to approving
16 the minutes as edited?

17 (No verbal response.)

18 CHAIRWOMAN ZALEWSKI: Hearing none, the
19 minutes are approved.

20 Item 2 concerns April 2021.
21 Solicitation of bids to sell standard energy
22 products to Ameren, ComEd, and MidAmerican. Are

1 there any objections to approving the procurement
2 administrator's recommendations of selection of
3 winning bids?

4 (No verbal response.)

5 CHAIRWOMAN ZALEWSKI: Hearing none, the
6 recommendations are approved.

7 This concludes our Public
8 Utilities Agenda.

9 Judge Teague-Kingsley, do we have
10 any other matters to come before the Commission
11 today?

12 THE COURT: No, Madam Chairman.

13 CHAIRWOMAN ZALEWSKI: Do the Commissioners
14 have any other business to discuss?

15 (No verbal response.)

16 CHAIRWOMAN ZALEWSKI: I just want to note
17 again, for the customers of ICC regulated that are
18 a part of stipulated agreement, namely Ameren
19 Illinois, ComEd, Nicor Gas, Peoples Gas, North
20 Shores Gas, Aqua Illinois, Illinois American Water,
21 and Utility Services of Illinois, if you receive a
22 disconnection notice, we urge you to act quickly

1 and call your utility.

2 If you call your utility before
3 getting shut off and work out a deferred payment
4 arrangement with the entity, you will not be shut
5 off for service. Also, by engaging with your
6 utility, you can check to see if you qualify for a
7 bill payment assistance to reduce arrearages and
8 receive help with entering into an extended
9 deferred payment arrangement. These are extra
10 consumer protections laid out in the stipulated
11 agreement, acknowledging that people are still
12 struggling during this time. The most important
13 thing to do is to call before being disconnected.

14 I'd like to mention a couple of
15 other resources currently available to customers at
16 this time. The Department of Commerce and Economic
17 Opportunity partnership with Governor Pritzker is
18 offering the Help Illinois Families initiative,
19 providing home energy assistance relief to eligible
20 Illinoisans through the month of May. To learn
21 about this program or to enroll in LIHEAP, please
22 visit DCEO's website.

1 The LIHEAP hotline is (877)
2 411-WARM, or 9276. Also, the Illinois Commerce
3 Commission stands ready to assist customers to
4 navigate their options. The ICC has both English-
5 and Spanish-speaking consumer services counselors
6 that can assist customers Monday through Friday,
7 8:30 to 5:00. The number to call is
8 1 (800) 524-0795.

9 There is also additional
10 information on the ICC's website at
11 ICC.Illinois.gov under the consumer's tab.
12 Specifically, there's a page that was -- there's a
13 tab under the consumer's tab that's titled
14 "Financial Assistance Program" that links directly
15 to the Utility Energy Assistance Programs.

16 Without any other comments and
17 without objections, the meeting is now adjourned.
18 Thank you.

19 (WHEREUPON, the above-entitled
20 matter was adjourned.)
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