



Illinois Commerce Commission

**NEWS**

**For Immediate Release  
October 29, 2018**

**ICC CONTACT:** Victoria Crawford  
Office: (217) 557-5819  
[Victoria.Crawford@Illinois.gov](mailto:Victoria.Crawford@Illinois.gov)

Marianne Manko  
Office: (217) 782-5793  
Mobile: (217) 993-1000  
[Marianne.Manko@Illinois.gov](mailto:Marianne.Manko@Illinois.gov)

## ICC Explores Smart Apps for Utility Operations

Chicago, IL...Utility smart apps are available to help consumers better manage their energy usage and save money. On Thursday, the Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC) held a policy session, led by Acting Commissioner Anastasia Palivos, to examine how utility smart apps benefit utility operations and consumer engagement, potential cyber security concerns, and what steps Illinois should take to foster the right environment for app adoption.

"While the world continues to become more digitized and automated, utilities are also transitioning to meet existing consumer expectations. While some utilities have made efforts to provide their customers services through mobile apps, there are more opportunities to provide services and benefits to utility customers using mobile apps," said Acting Commissioner Palivos.

The first panel, *Utility Operations and Customer Engagement*, was moderated by Ritta Merza, Legal and Policy Advisory for the ICC. This discussion focused on the benefits of smart apps for the utility sector and energy consumers, and the potential of these apps to help transform Illinois' electric grid. Panelists included: Deepak Swamy, CEO (*IRestore*); Michael Rutkowski, Managing Director (*Navigant*); Kevin Dick, President (*Delta Institute*); Ty Benefiel, CEO (*MasterGenius*); Michael McCallan, VP of Emergency Planning and Electric Services (*NationalGrid*).

"Thursday's policy session was a great opportunity to discuss innovations in the electric utility industry that can provide immediate and tangible benefits for customers. The panel showed ICC's commitment to exploring new ways to create value for Illinois consumers and exemplified Illinois' leadership in the smart energy transition," said Ty Benefiel, Co-Founder and President at MeterGenius.

“Utilities are evolving as customers demand simpler, more accessible information. Regulators, software developers, and utility staff can work together to innovate and identify cost-savings for all,” said Kevin Dick, Director at Delta Institute

“Successful mobile apps for Electric and Gas Utilities need to demonstrate value and must be effortless for users,” said Michael McCallan, VP of Emergency Planning & Electric Services at National Grid.

“Utilities can now use smartphone apps to assess damage, inspect assets, comply with safety standards, assure quality, mobilize crews, and track and manage work, achieving safer, more reliable and efficient system operation,” said Deepak Swamy, Founder and CEO of IRestore.

The second panel, *Policy Considerations for Utility Smart Apps*, was moderated by Emily Brumit, Legal and Policy Advisor for the ICC. Panelists included: Jennifer Mesenbrink, Manager of EChannels (*ComEd*); Dave Kolata, Executive Director (*Citizens Utility Board*); Ellen Rendos, Director, Credit, Collections and Remittance (*Nicor Gas*). These experts shared their ideas to encourage app adoption and engagement in Illinois amid cyber security constraints.

Citizen Utility Board Executive Director Dave Kolata said user experience is key when designing apps for utility customers, and that smart apps can provide useful information to customers looking to cut energy usage, save money and improve the environment.

“I appreciated the chance to speak with the Commissioners and hear from my fellow panelists on their perspectives on digital customer service – what’s working, and what’s coming next. At ComEd, we are focused on understanding customers’ expectations and designing apps and online experiences that meet those needs. This was a great chance for us to share our progress,” said Jenn Mesenbrink, Manager of eChannels at ComEd.

You may visit the [ICC website](#) to view presentations from the policy session.

####

### ***About the Illinois Commerce Commission***

The Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC) is a quasi-judicial body made up of five Commissioners. Through its Public Utility Program, the Commission oversees the provision of adequate, reliable, efficient and safe utility services at the least possible cost to Illinois citizens served by electric, natural gas, telecommunications, water and sewer public utility companies. Through its Transportation Regulatory Program, the Commission oversees public safety and consumer protection programs with regard to intrastate commercial motor carriers of general freight, household goods movers, relocation towers, safety towers, personal property warehouses and repossession agencies. The Commission’s Rail Safety Program also inspects and regulates the general safety of railroad tracks, facilities and equipment in the state.

To learn more about the Commission, its offices and bureaus, click [here](#). If you are a consumer who needs help resolving a utility dispute call 800-524-0795 or file an online complaint [here](#). For a complaint related to transportation, call 217-782-6448.

Follow the Illinois Commerce Commission on Twitter @ILCommerceComm