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## Utilities Report Positive Gains at the 2022 ICC Supplier Diversity Policy Session

Chicago, IL – At the Illinois Commerce Commission’s 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Utility Supplier Diversity Policy Session on Wednesday, the state’s large investor-owned electric, natural gas, water, and sewer companies provided progress reports about their supplier diversity spend in 2021 and identified procurement goals for 2022. Over the past seven years, utility spending with Minority, Women and Veteran-Owned businesses has steadily grown from an average of 15 percent to over 1/3 (with some utilities reporting gains of almost 50%). The companies that participated in the policy session were Ameren Illinois, Aqua Illinois, ComEd, Illinois American Water, Nicor Gas, and People’s Gas/North Shore Gas.

In her opening remarks, Chairman Carrie Zalewski said, “Of the \$5.1 billion spend among these 6 utility companies, 44% or \$2.2 billion was diverse spend. These gains reflect a clear and continuous commitment to communities of color and a desire to reflect the diversity of the state. It’s also exciting to see the steady increase of diverse spend with Illinois-based businesses. But work remains, and we continue to do a deep dive of the information to examine the areas that need the most work.”

The moderator for the two-panel policy session was Jeanine Robinson, the ICC’s Director of Diversity and Community Affairs. Under her leadership, the ICC staff collaborates with other state agencies to promote workshops designed to solicit opportunities from diverse vendors. She also works closely with grass roots organizations promoting communities of color and women-owned businesses to develop relationships and expand opportunities with businesses historically left behind.

During the first panel, utility Presidents and CEOs highlighted supplier diversity gains within their individual companies. Each of the companies reported strong improvements in diverse spending with Illinois-based companies, and highlighted achievements to improve diverse spend for professional services. Utility Presidents and CEOs participating in the policy session included:

- Justin Ladner, *President*, Illinois American Water
- Torrence Hinton, *President & CEO*, Peoples Gas/NorthShore Gas
- Wendall Dallas, *President & CEO*, Nicor Gas
- Gil Quiniones, *CEO*, ComEd
- Leonard Singh, *President & CEO*, Ameren Illinois
- David Carter, *President*, Aqua Illinois

A second panel with various executives from the utilities and their parent companies held a deeper discussion into the steps they are taking to grow diversity within the Professional Services Industry such as banking and finance, legal services, engineering, technology, and communications. Panelists spoke about opportunities in the various sectors. They stressed the importance of matchmaking through community outreach and networking through organizations that help diverse professionals to build relationships and develop expertise needed by the utilities.

The Climate and Equitable Jobs Act which puts Illinois on the path to decarbonization by 2050 ensures underinvested communities, benefit from both cleaner air and good paying renewable energy jobs. Chief sponsor of CEJA, State Representative Marcus Evans, attended the policy session to thank the utilities for their efforts, and pushed them to do even more using tools available through CEJA to open doors that have been cemented shut.

If you missed the policy session, a video of the event can be viewed on the ICC website [here](#).

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