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OPEN LETTER TO GOV. MIKE PENCE: VETO SB560

The Honorable Mike Pence, Governor of the State of Indiana:

Senate Bill 560 (Utility Transmission) will likely be headed to your desk in the near future. As a representative of over 40,000 residential ratepayers in our great State, Citizens Action Coalition of Indiana respectfully requests that you protect Hoosier ratepayers with the same vigor with which you are fighting to protect Hoosier taxpayers. We pray that you use the authority granted to your office in Article 5, Section 14 of the Indiana Constitution to veto SB560.

We know that you are aware of the significant increases in the cost of energy with which Hoosier ratepayers are currently struggling. In your Roadmap for Indiana, you correctly state: ***“Unfortunately, Indiana’s status as a low-cost energy state is in danger of changing.”*** Indiana now ranks 24th in the country for industrial electric rates, and the average monthly electric bill for residential households in Indiana similarly ranks as the 24th highest in our nation. SB560 will exacerbate the very problem that you identify, making it easier for the monopoly utilities to raise the monthly bills of captive Hoosier consumers and jeopardizing our slipping status as a low-cost energy state.

In a recent op-ed published in the Indianapolis Star, you express your desire for ***“...a budget that let[s] hardworking Hoosiers keep more of what they earn.”*** SB560 will achieve the exact opposite of your objective by sending more of Hoosiers’ earnings to the coffers of the monopoly utilities through significant increases in monthly utility bills. Meanwhile, utilities are realizing significant (and, in some cases, record) earnings, whereas Hoosier households are struggling with stagnant and diminishing wages.

We appreciate the intent of the Indiana General Assembly in moving SB560. We agree that Indiana faces challenges in our need to improve, modernize, and repair our utility infrastructure. We also agree that we must make investments in an effort to create jobs and make Indiana an attractive place to start a business and raise a family. However, SB560 will leave these decisions in the hands of an industry notorious for being irresponsible with capital as they strive to increase earnings for shareholders, frequently at the expense of their customers and the public interest.

We were encouraged with the plan you articulated in your Roadmap for Indiana to ***“[w]ork with stakeholders to develop strategies for effectively addressing our need to upgrade our electricity generation and transmission infrastructure.”*** SB560 ignores this stated desire and effectively closes the door on the discussion by leaving the future of Indiana’s energy policy squarely in the control of the monopoly utilities.

SB560 is contrary to all of your stated campaign and gubernatorial objectives. We ask that you reflect on the impact that SB560 will have on hardworking Hoosiers. We request you consider the tremendous consequences that this legislation will have on the quality of life for the most vulnerable among us, particularly the elderly population, who survive on fixed incomes and are forced to make tough choices on a daily basis between food, energy, and health care. Please protect Hoosier ratepayers, protect the public interest, and protect your legacy by vetoing SB560.

Respectfully,

Kerwin Olson
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