

1915 W 18th St, Ste C, Indianapolis, IN 46202
317.205.3535

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Contact: Ben Inskeep, Program Director (317) 735-7741, binskeep@citact.org
Kerwin Olson, Executive Director (317) 735-7727, kolson@citact.org

CENTERPOINT URGED FEDERAL GOVERNMENT NOT TO REISSUE EMERGENCY ORDER ON COSTLY COAL PLANT, LETTER SHOWS

The U.S. Department of Energy ignored CenterPoint's pleas not to force its coal plant to continue operating despite the utility warning that long outages and expensive upgrades would be needed that were "neither practical nor financially responsible."

INDIANAPOLIS – CenterPoint begged the U.S. Department of Energy in February not to re-issue an emergency order forcing it to keep coal-fired Culley Unit 2 open, according to a letter obtained by CAC. The February 17, 2026, letter from CenterPoint's Indiana Region President Mike Roeder to U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Secretary Chris Wright stated that maintaining the coal plant "will require substantial investment to support an inefficient and increasingly unreliable asset, rather than advancing affordable and reliable service for customers in southwestern Indiana," and requested the DOE "abstain from issuing subsequent...Orders for Unit 2" that would require CenterPoint to continue operating it.

The U.S. DOE disregarded CenterPoint's pleas, as on March 23, 2026, it issued another order directing CenterPoint keep the unit open through at least June 21, 2026.

"This letter shows that even utilities like CenterPoint admit that there is no grid emergency and that coal plants are too unreliable, expensive, and polluting to continue operating," said Ben Inskeep, CAC Program Director. "The federal government's unlawful orders directing utilities to keep dilapidated and unreliable coal plants open at a massive and growing cost to consumers is an outrageous abuse of power that will cause Americans' energy bills to continue to increase."

CenterPoint's letter called into question the underlying rationale of the DOE forcing the coal plant to stay open, noting that:

- NERC found the regional MISO grid in which Culley Unit 2 is located, has an Energy Risk level of "Normal" in 2026.
- MISO currently has excess capacity, not too little capacity as alleged by DOE, and MISO approved the retirement of Culley Unit 2.
- CenterPoint currently has adequate generation capacity without Culley Unit 2 to meet its reliability obligations.

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- CenterPoint’s last three Integrated Resource Plans have consistently demonstrated that retiring Culley Unit 2 was the most prudent option, and CenterPoint had planned to retire the unit at the end of 2025.

CenterPoint’s letter highlighted the atrocious performance of the unit during the first 48 days of the initial DOE emergency order, including:

- It was on outage for a shocking 26 days (54%) due to equipment issues, which underscores the dilapidated condition of the ancient power plant that was built in 1966;
- It was available but did not operate for 5 days (10%) because it was not economical to do so; and
- It could only operate on a limited basis for 17 days (35%) due to maintenance issues, including only operating at 45 MW during Winter Storm Fern on January 24-25 before systemic equipment failures forced an outage on January 26. This admission by CenterPoint appears to contradict the U.S. DOE [claim](#) that the unit operated “almost every day from January 21-February 1.”

To continue operating Culley Unit 2 past March, CenterPoint says a prolonged 10-week outage for a turbine overhaul is required at a staggering cost of up to \$18 million, among other costly and major interventions needed to continue operating the Unit.

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A copy of [CenterPoint’s Letter to the DOE is available here.](#)