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Indiana Regulators Reject Utility's Proposal for Massive Gas Plant

The billion-dollar facility would have cost utility customers more for an unnecessary plant

INDIANAPOLIS—Today, regulators at the Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission rejected a proposal for a new gas-fired power plant by Vectren, a CenterPoint Energy Company which is a Houston-based utility company. Vectren first proposed the plant in early 2018 to replace the bulk of its aging, inefficient coal-burning units. The plant was proposed to be built on the site of Vectren's existing AB Brown coal-fired power plant located in Posey County near Evansville, Indiana. The project had an estimated cost of nearly 1 billion dollars and was expected to raise the energy costs of southern Indiana residents upon completion.

Citizens Action Coalition of Indiana (CAC) and Earthjustice represented a coalition of Indiana energy customers, including CAC, Sierra Club, and Valley Watch, who challenged the proposal at the Commission. Representatives of coal industry groups along with the Indiana Office of Utility Consumer Counselor (OUCC), the state agency representing ratepayer interests, also opposed the proposed gas plant as not in the best interests of Indiana consumers.

Attorneys for the groups contended that Vectren's Integrated Resource Plan was based on shoddy modeling that rushed energy customers into a large capital investment with little to no consideration of less risky, lower-cost alternatives to the 850 megawatt plant. The groups argued that the proposed gas plant was over-built and far exceeded the demand of Vectren's customers. Consumer parties also noted that the plant would lock consumers into a fossil fuel energy infrastructure for the next 40 years, over the life of the plant, and not allow flexibility to employ conservation and clean energy alternatives.

The coal industry keeps pushing the lie that utilities need on-site fuel to keep the lights on, but in reality, Vectren—like every other utility across the country—can reliably serve its customers without keeping dirty, expensive, and inefficient coal units running, and without maintaining a reliance on fossil fuels and building massive gas plants to replace their dinosaur coal fleets.

"We are pleased with the Commission's decision to protect Indiana energy customers," **said Earthjustice attorney Thom Cmar.** "Southwestern Indiana customers already have the highest rates in the state. This proposed plant would only generate dirty energy that they do not need, and put them on the hook for the cost."

"Kudos to Chairman Huston and the Commission. It takes a lot of courage to say no to the utilities," **stated Kerwin Olson, Executive Director of CAC.** "The Commission did the right thing and protected the captive ratepayers of Vectren from this absurd and risky proposal from Vectren."

"As a representative of Sierra Club and as a Vectren customer raising my daughter in Southwest Indiana, I am grateful to the IURC for this decision," **said Wendy Bredhold, senior campaign representative with Sierra Club's Beyond Coal Campaign.** "Their proposed gas plant was too big, expensive and risky, and would have committed our community to burning fossil fuels for decades to come. Vectren made the

right decision to retire its coal plants, and now has an opportunity within their 20-year planning process this year to do the right thing and replace coal with clean and affordable wind, solar, energy efficiency and battery storage.”
