

Suzanne Barker Griffith

Comments to the KY PSC related to Case Number 2025-00275, Jan. 13, 2026, Frankfort, KY

This is the fourth and final time I have addressed this commission in Case Number 2025-00257, driving a total of 16 hours to get in my 20-some minutes with you. I have tried to weigh each word carefully, and I feel you have listened to me and to the many others who stepped up to the microphone to discuss their concerns.

You have also said you have read each submitted statement. I thank you for that. I have as well, often with tears in my eyes.

The hardships in the personal lives and finances of ratepayers are well-documented. The harm as well to the glue that holds EKY together, the small and mid-size businesses, school systems, cities, county governments, churches, and nonprofits has been well expressed.

I am going to highlight one of these nonprofits right now.

Hemphill Community Center is a gathering place for families, friends, and neighbors in Letcher County. A place where mountain traditions such as quilt making, traditional music, and hospitality abound. It is also where people went to seek comfort, food, safety, and supplies when the flood hit in 2022.

Gwen Johnson, who is the director of Hemphill Community Center, was quoted in the following statement: "Many of its citizens, in the throes of addiction, have been incarcerated. When they emerge from their cells, they find it almost impossible to find a job." The Black Sheep Bakery, she said, "is a place willing to forgive and willing to train folks who are searching for acceptance and work...Hemphill Community Center believes these folks are a latent asset of the community."

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Gwen and others have worked hard and made many adjustments, including installing a roof full of solar panels and changing out door lighting, to save on their electric bill, which ran around \$2,000 in 2019. Of course, power bills have gone up 40% since then.

Gwen Johnson (if ever there was a Saint of EKY, it would be her) cut straight to the heart of the matter when she said in her testimony in Hazard, "What is fair? What is just, and what is reasonable about another increase?"

When Gwen Johnson, who represents the best of EKY, speaks, you need to listen and reflect. My suggestion is to go back and listen to her testimony again.

To me she is the heart and hands of Jesus in EKY. There are many others as well doing God's work in the region.

The harm to Gwen's mission in life to help, love, and support the people of her community due to oppressive rate hikes would be great, and yet another hurdle in bettering her beloved community.

Overall, the harm to residential ratepayers has been well defined in Roger Colten's testimony, which I read and highlighted with great interest.

By now, after listening to all the in-person public comments and reading the submitted comments, you must know that ratepayers cannot take another big hit to their power bills.

I understand there has been a JOINT MOTION TO APPROVE SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT with Kentucky Power Company, Kentucky Industrial Utility Customers, Inc., and Kentucky Solar Energy Industries Association, Inc., as signatory parties with a 12% rate hike in year three, and a 8% rate hike in year one, and a 9% rate hike in year 2. To me this percentages are just way too high.

I think it is very concerning who did not sign off on this agreement, those of whom best represent the residential ratepayers. The Attorney General of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, by and through his Office of Rate Intervention ("Attorney General" or "AG"); SWVA Kentucky, LLC; and Mountain Association, Appalachian Citizens' Law Center, Kentuckians for the Commonwealth, and Kentucky Solar Energy Society (collectively, "Joint Intervenors") are not signatories to the Settlement Agreement.

I find a section of Tanner Wolfram's testimony especially concerning.

Question: DID ALL OF THE PARTIES TO THIS PROCEEDING PARTICIPATE IN THE NEGOTIATIONS THAT LED TO THE EXECUTION OF THE SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT?

Answer: No. Following the December 15, 2025, virtual settlement conference, the Attorney General ceased participating in settlement negotiations.

As quoted from the Attorney General Russell Coleman's Office of Rate Intervention's website, "Under Kentucky law, the office is responsible for representing the interests of Kentucky consumers before governmental rate-making agencies, focusing on utility cases (electric, water,

telecommunications, and natural gas) before the Public Service Commission – KRS 367.150 (8).” “The Office of Rate Intervention fights to ensure your utility bills are fair.”

When representatives of the government agency, by law, who represent consumers, cease participating in settlement negotiations, I don't see how this settlement is in consumers' best interest.

In yesterday's RESPONSE TO KENTUCKY POWER'S MOTION TO RECESS by the AG's office, the following statement was made, “To be clear, the AG did not participate in settlement discussions in this matter. While invited to the initial settlement meeting, the Attorney General declined to participate in those discussions viewing settlement of this matter as inappropriate.”

I am asking the Kentucky PSC to reject the current settlement due to a lack of residential consumer intervenors as signatories and Kentucky's elected Attorney General ceasing to participate in negotiations, leaving consumers without government representation in the total settlement negotiations.

If there is a settlement, I would like to see the Kentucky Attorney General's signature on it, as well as the other entities who best represent residential ratepayers.

I am also here today to talk about solutions and a path forward. The equation of population loss plus industry loss equals ever-rising electric bills is in no way fair, just, or reasonable. The truth is, Kentucky Power's own high rates run off ratepayers, the decommissioning of Big Sandy 2

reduced population and industrial sales, and high industrial rates are not conducive to attracting industry to the area.

A better way must be found than Kentucky Power's constant rate hike requests citing loss of population and industry, that far outpace normal inflation and unfairly burden EKY families.

In Ashland and Hazard, I talked about the One East Plan and left you with a copy both times. It is needed, and if translated into KY law, could be part of the final order. Senator Scott Madon is going to co-sponsor and it looks very promising.

In addition, I left you with the legislative priorities by the Kentucky Cabinet for Economic Development which specifically outlines a section just on rural and EKY. Some of which could become a reality this session.

Please do not be in a rush to settle this case or make the final order. Obviously, a lot of information has been presented with more to come and the state legislature is making moves that would improve economic development in Kentucky Power's service region and ultimately economic development is needed to address high electrical rates in EKY.

Be cognizant of the fact as well that the failing Mitchell (an aging coal fired WV plant that was forced on ratepayers in 2013) cooling tower bill will be coming due soon and falling on the shoulders of unsuspecting customers. Kentucky Power really needs to address this issue with their ratepayers.

Make no mistake about it, I want Kentucky Power to have the money they say they need. It just needs to be through the hard work of attracting jobs,

businesses, and industries to EKY, not off the backs of those struggling to live and work in the service area.

I made the following statement in my Oct. 2, 2025, submitted comment to the PSC: Steps that I would like to see in the future:

1. A meeting involving the following to discuss the expectations and needs of Kentucky Power along with Kentucky Power better understanding the needs of customers: representatives from every city and county fiscal court in the Kentucky Power service, representatives from the KY PSC, representatives from the Kentucky Cabinet for Economic Development, every state elected official in the service region, representatives from the Governor's office, intervenors, and the COO and other representatives from AEP and Kentucky Power. The topic needs to be ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT! Kentucky Power has lost around $\frac{1}{3}$ of its industrial sales over the past 15 years, while EKY has lost so much more. Change must happen!

In other words, the EKY power players need to know the economic development and industrial targets that must be met to help stabilize rates. This is something I do not believe has ever been presented by Kentucky Power employees to the entities mentioned. I am hoping the PSC will put this, or something similar in the final order.

After all, as I previously spoke about, on Feb. 12, 2025 Kentucky Power President and Chief Operating Officer, Cynthia Wiseman testified before the KY Senate Natural Resources and Energy Committee stating Kentucky Power Priorities include stabilizing and lowering customer rates. A plan should match that priority.

2. The service region needs a strategic plan with ongoing meetings and backing, and a focus on execution from the Kentucky Cabinet for

Economic Development, the Governor's office, and local governments to address the needs of ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN EASTERN KENTUCKY!

In conclusion, as quoted from the press release in rate case number 2023-00159, "In making its decision, the Commission found the proposal's impact on residential customers to be 'excessive and disturbing,' in part as evidenced by the comments in the case indicating customers could not afford further rate increases." I thank you for your due diligence in listening to ratepayers in that case and this current case and implore you to do all you can to ensure rates stay as low as possible.

Thank you for your public service to the good people of Kentucky.



(<https://mtassociation.org/>).

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Resilience in Action: How Hemphill Community Center is Powering Through Hard Times with Solar Energy

August 21, 2024

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"You've just got to roll up your sleeves. Do we fail and fall straight on our face with things? Yes, everything from a recipe to someone going back to jail or the flood coming and washing out everything. There's things you have no control over. There are failures, but there are triumphs," Gwen Johnson says as the camera rolls.

Gwen and her mother, Mabel, were recently featured in a film (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JujEfNXc22A>) about their incredible efforts to give new life to Hemphill Community Center, formerly Hemphill Grade School, located in a former coal camp in Letcher County, Kentucky.

"This was my fifth-grade classroom," Gwen says on the film as they walk through the two-story building. "This is the school where my mom went to school, where I went to school, and where my kids went to school."

"They broke our hearts because they closed it," Mabel, who earned the title of 'everybody's mamaw' before her passing, said. "We said, how do we have a meeting space for the community? Let's do something to try to save it. And we did."



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Over the years, they established Hemphill as a community center. It has continued to serve as a beloved gathering place in the area, now hosting music, dancing, and arts workshops. It is also home to Black Sheep Brick Oven & Bakery, a second-chance employment program for people in addiction recovery, and a Coal Miners Memorial garden. It is a place that locals come to gather, and a place that people who have since moved away come back to visit and reminisce.

“People think I make money here,” Gwen laughs as she works in the kitchen at Hemphill, “but this is where I spend money.”

That reality came to be too true around 2019. Along with other nonprofits in the area ([https://mtassociation.org/energy/building-momentum-in-clean-energy-one-county-at-a-](https://mtassociation.org/energy/building-momentum-in-clean-energy-one-county-at-a-time/)



time/), they found themselves at risk of closing their doors due to rising energy costs – with bills of over \$2,000 in the winter. Mountain Association’s Energy Team came in to explore solar and efficiency savings. We facilitated energy audits and upgrades, ultimately financing a \$48,500 solar installation, completed by Wilderness Trace Sola (<https://wildernesssolar.com/>), who trained local workers as part of the installation. This allowed Hemphill to save nearly \$7,000 a year on their electric bills and continue providing its critical community services.

However, when the historic deadly floods of 2022 came, destroying the nearby town of Neon, Hemphill became a regional hub for resources. And still, two years later, people are using the facility for Wi-Fi, showers and laundry as recovery continues to stretch on. As a result, energy usage has increased. So, once again, we worked together to find savings.

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We discovered that replacing four outdoor lights, at a cost of just \$450, will save over \$1,000 per year in electricity costs (and be much brighter!). We also helped design an expansion of the center's solar panels along with battery storage, so they can also be a resiliency hub in the face of future power outages and flooding, which are only becoming more frequent. The work was completed by local installer HOMES Inc. (<https://mtassociation.org/energy/homes-inc-whitesburg-kentucky/>) (who now has installation capability thanks in part to the training from Wilderness Trace and from Mountain Association's technical assistance).

Mountain Association partnered with General Motors to make this solar expansion and storage project possible. By combining more than \$35,000 of General Motor funds with additional funds from the Solar Finance Fund (<https://www.solarfinancefund.org/apply/>), Hemphill's energy costs will not only be lower, but the added solar battery storage will ensure that they can supply their building with enough electricity to power their lights, outlets, WiFi and refrigerators should disasters, such as floods, hit the region again.

"Solar and efficiency has been a gamechanger in how we reinvent ourselves moving forward into the future."



Cameron Mott of our Energy Team, a former chimney sweep, was also able to complete some upgrades to the brick oven to improve its safety as well as air quality at the Center.

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Housing stock in KY Power's service area from kyhousing.org

BOYD COUNTY

Number of Mobile Homes 2,152 (11.10%),
Built 1989 or Earlier 17,400 (80.25%)

BREATHITT COUNTY

Number of Mobile Homes 2,159 (40.70%),
Built 1989 or Earlier 3,890 (62.69%)

CARTER COUNTY

Number of Mobile Homes 3,354 (31.50%),
Built 1989 or Earlier 7,421 (60.40%)

CLAY COUNTY

Number of Mobile Homes 2,365 (30.80%),
Built 1989 or Earlier 5,057 (57.14%)

ELLIOTT COUNTY

Number of Mobile Homes 1,039 (39.60%),
Built 1989 or Earlier 1,962 (58.36%)

FLOYD COUNTY

Number of Mobile Homes 4,265 (28.00%),
Built 1989 or Earlier 12,558 (69.16%)

GREENUP COUNTY

Number of Mobile Homes 1,986 (13.90%),
Built 1989 or Earlier 12,124 (74.50%)

JOHNSON COUNTY

Number of Mobile Homes 2,390 (27.10%),
Built 1989 or Earlier 6,988 (66.26%)

KNOTT COUNTY

Number of Mobile Homes 2,195 (36.20%),
Built 1989 or Earlier 4,663 (62.67%)

LAWRENCE COUNTY

Number of Mobile Homes 1,984 (32.30%),
Built 1989 or Earlier 4,198 (57.79%)

LESLIE COUNTY

Number of Mobile Homes 1,825 (44.80%),
Built 1989 or Earlier 3,345 (63.54%)

LETCHER COUNTY

Number of Mobile Homes 2,795 (27.90%),
Built 1989 or Earlier 8,035 (69.41%)

LEWIS COUNTY

Number of Mobile Homes 1,293 (23.80%),
Built 1989 or Earlier 4,207 (64.94%)

MAGOFFIN COUNTY

Number of Mobile Homes 2,428 (48.30%),
Built 1989 or Earlier 3,733 (62.90%)

MARTIN COUNTY

Number of Mobile Homes 1,688 (39.30%),
Built 1989 or Earlier 3,203 (62.25%)

MORGAN COUNTY

Number of Mobile Homes 1,805 (36.50%),
Built 1989 or Earlier 3,365 (57.33%)

OWSLEY COUNTY

Number of Mobile Homes 419 (24.90%),
Built 1989 or Earlier 1,495 (68.93%)

PERRY COUNTY

Number of Mobile Homes 3,399 (30.70%),
Built 1989 or Earlier 8,326 (65.08%)

PIKE COUNTY

Number of Mobile Homes 8,974 (34.70%),
Built 1989 or Earlier 19,080 (62.91%)

ROWAN COUNTY

Number of Mobile Homes 1,957 (23.10%),
Built 1989 or Earlier 5,894 (58.20%)