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CUB Fights MMAC Attempt to Gut Funding for Challenges to Utility Rate Increases

MADISON — Citizens Utility Board Executive Director Kira Loehr is fighting the Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce’s attempt to gut funding for ratepayer challenges to utility rate increases and other requests before the Public Service Commission. MMAC’s proposal would leave ordinary consumers without an advocate, while requiring those same consumers to pay millions of dollars a year to utility companies so the companies can argue for whatever they want.

“For reasons known only to it, MMAC has suddenly and vigorously launched a crusade to cripple Wisconsin’s only statewide advocate for residential and small business utility consumers,” [wrote Loehr](#) in a *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* op-ed. MMAC’s efforts to gut consumer funding came as one of its key contributors, We Energies, was seeking permission from the PSC to acquire another utility holding company for an astonishing \$9.1 billion.

Each year, utilities bring proposals before the PSC seeking to spend hundreds of millions of dollars of ratepayer money. For over 35 years CUB has challenged those requests, helping to cut more than \$3 billion from utility bills. Yet, as [previously reported](#) by the *Journal Sentinel*, the MMAC lobbied the legislature’s Joint Finance Committee to slash and outright eliminate grants that have allowed CUB to represent the interests of Wisconsin utility consumers for decades.

“CUB focuses most of its efforts on reducing the overall size of a utility’s request so that all ratepayers benefit,” noted Loehr. “Last year alone, CUB helped keep more than \$161 million in utility-proposed increases out of ratepayers’ bills at a cost of less than 14 cents per customer per year.”

“Under MMAC’s proposal, only utilities and others with deep pockets will have a voice before the PSC,” stated Loehr. “All costs for utility staff, lawyers and consultants to push *for* giant rate hikes would still be paid for by ratepayers *with no caps or limits*.”

CUB will continue to fight MMAC’s proposal to ensure customers have a say in PSC decisions affecting Wisconsin’s 2.5 million residential and small business utility customers.

Loehr also appeared on WisconsinEye’s *Newsmakers*, joined by a representative from MMAC to debate the effort to defund CUB and utility consumer advocacy in Wisconsin, posted [here](#), or copy <https://youtu.be/4ilKpJK9zVI> into your internet browser. Loehr’s full *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* op-ed is available [here](#) or by copying <http://www.jsonline.com/news/opinion/we-energies-pal-mmac-trying-to-silence-consumers-b99491290z1-302183701.html> into your internet browser.

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The Citizens Utility Board of Wisconsin is a member-supported, nonprofit organization that advocates for reliable and affordable utility service. CUB represents the interests of residential, farm, and small business customers of electric, natural gas, and water utilities before the legislature, regulatory agencies, and the courts.