

We thank the Sierra Club for including Eastern Service Workers Association and the thousands of affected low-income service worker households who have joined our efforts over 40 years.

By way of introduction, ESWA is a free and voluntary, private membership association of, by and for low-income service workers and their families. We started in Philadelphia in 1976 with a founding Advisory Committee made up of low-income workers, clergy, labor organizers, business owners, college faculty, and others who had been involved in previous struggles for economic justice for the poor. Our office has been on the 1500 block of South Street since our beginning days. We are entirely run through volunteer staff and we take no government funding or any other funding with strings attached. The association has a Worker Benefit Council (WBC) comprised of leading members, delegates for their community or worksites, who help run the association program and meet regularly to determine policy and solutions to problems members bring to the organization.

We operate with the volunteer participation of concerned community residents, a free of charge self-help benefit program to aid members with survival necessities.

For more than 20 years, the association's volunteers and members have advocated for its members affected by rising electric and gas rates, as well as punishing government shutoff and collection policies, compounded by worsening climate conditions.

Philadelphia is the largest poor city in America with one quarter of its residents living below the federal poverty level. Philadelphia, along with Baltimore, has the highest rate of hot weather deaths in the US. Homes in poor and minority communities are, on average 22°F hotter in the summer than homes in wealthier communities.

According to a 2017 NAACP study, 24% of families below 150% of the federal poverty line went without food and 37% went without medical care or dental care in order to pay a utility bill. But the Workers Benefit Council is familiar with these problems directly, not based on studies. It is our members who are the lowest-income working people in Philadelphia and their unemployed or disabled or elderly dependents.

The WBC has spoken out against the deadly harm energy policies have on our members, discussing and deciding on what policies we stand for that could actually bring the money back into our local economy. In fact, the WBC has appeared, testified and fought nearly every rate

increase request by PGW and PECO since the 1990's and has won back millions of dollars of increases, but still the responsible City and State agencies keep raising the rates further and further out of our reach.

The Workers Benefits Council has submitted a list of demands for policy changes to the Public Utility Commission based on the direct experience of harm suffered by our members and their families in handling thousands of cases of people terminated from electric or gas service, and more recently, a shocking number of water service shut offs carried out by the City. Most of these individual requests resulted in getting service restored, usually after many days of advocacy, to beat back the demand for more money than the customer can sustainably afford. The WBC's demands have been presented as testimony and by petition to Philadelphia Gas Works, PECO, the Pennsylvania Public Service Commission and more recently the Philadelphia Water Rate Board. They are:

- 1) Year-round moratorium on utility shutoffs for any household at or below 300% of Federal Poverty Level.
- 2) Restoration of service for those at these income levels who have been shut off with no reconnect fees.
- 3) Lower the rates for those at 300% of poverty or below such that no one is paying anymore than 6% of income on utilities, as per Federal standards for household budgets.
- 4) Apply the same policies to those above 300% of poverty level who can demonstrate financial hardship.

Through these campaigns, the WBC has stopped hundreds of millions of dollars in gas, electric and water rate hikes, won some limited protection for low-income households, including promises of a low-income rate for water and for electric and gas service.

In light of what we know about global warming and climate change we are now demanding what scientists have been saying, we need to make change now by 2030 not by 2050. Utilities must convert to 100% renewable energy by 2030. We can't wait until 2050; that is 20 years too late. The cost of going renewable must come out of their profits. They created the problem by using fossil fuels and they should be responsible for fixing it. That means no rate increases to ratepayers.

Bondholders for Philadelphia Gas Works (PGW) are collecting \$49.2 million in interest each year off of the bonds by PGW charging customers and shutting off those who cannot pay. PECO, the Pennsylvania Electric Company's Adjusted Operating Earnings for the fourth quarter of 2018 increased to \$125 million from \$95 million in the fourth quarter of 2017. PECO is owned by EXELON Corporation. This is being paid for by rate increases, which our members

cannot survive. This past winter, 18,500 Pennsylvania households went into the winter without utility service; this includes 7,777 Philadelphia gas customers who had their gas shut off.

One quarter of the 1.6 million residents of Philadelphia face devastating poverty conditions. At the very bottom, over 12% of Philadelphians -- 400,000 people -- are at half the official poverty rate; they are trying to live on \$833 a month for a single parent with two kids. That also includes thousands of single individuals with an actual income of less than \$495 a month.

This means that climate-induced extreme weather impacts the poor of Philadelphia first and hardest, who can least afford lost jobs and wages, repairs to damaged homes, and loss of vehicles needed for work. Most have nowhere to go to escape danger or to recover.

We urge the Sierra Club to adopt a program that makes it possible for our people to survive, and to call for a 2030 deadline to achieve it. We are suffering the effects of climate change and climate change policy now and cannot wait.

We are promoting a global program agreed to by all members of the United Nations since 2015 including the US, called The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals. There are 17 goals are an attempt at a complete definition of problems affecting people and nations and the necessary solutions.

Goal 7 is to ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all and Goal 13 it to take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

The only way to have 100% renewable energy that is affordable is to make it affordable and accessible to our lowest income population first, because that is the means for survival of those most impacted by climate change.

Instead of raising rates for renewable energy, profit-driven, investor owned energy companies must use their profits to implement 100% renewable. Public entities not operating with a guaranteed profit margin can adopt a ways and means approach to fund conversion to 100% renewable.

Ending shutoffs of the poor will place the pressure for solving the problem where it belongs -- on those who created the problem -- and not take it out of the lives of those who are hardest hit. Thank you for your consideration.

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