

Case Number: UWI-W-15-01
Utility Company: United Water Idaho

RECEIVED

2015 JUL -7 AM 8:32

I am disappointed to learn that United Water has filed for an increase in rates that will amount to an overall increase of 13.2%. I fully understand, and try to sympathize with, a business trying to make money and stay profitable. United Water cites increases in energy costs, personnel, benefits, and depreciation expenses in the letter rate-payers received the last week of June.

I feel 13.2%, however, represents an inappropriately large increase to account for those expenses. The average household also experiences an increase in energy costs, and increases across the board in the cost of living. Even simple things, like the cost of providing for a family in the form of nourishing meals, continues to increase. That is, unfortunately, a fact of living in a country with a growing population, finite resources, and increasing demand on those resources. But wages in this country are not keeping up with the yearly cost of living increases, so of course a family's expenses go up as income goes up, created a net loss of income. Let's say, for discussion purposes, a household is seen as a business. When the household suffers a net loss in income (not to mention other costs, like healthcare, maintenance costs of cars, dwelling units, appliances) suffer losses, we take from our savings (profits) or from a larger portion of our salary/wages to pay for those increases. We do not have anyone we can charge to cover those costs. But United Water does. I think increased costs should be shared by both the company and its customers — but to do right by customers, they should not bear the brunt of the burden.

I know that slight price/rate increases over time is the norm for businesses with paying customers, but a 13% increase in any service is quite significant. If my local running shoe store suddenly sold the same pair of shoes for 13% more, I wouldn't buy those shoes. If I had to pay 13% more for my regular morning coffee, most folks would pass, at least for a while. Usually a price increase is slight. A slight increase is expected, over time, for most goods and services as the price of production increases. Companies want to make money, and some of those costs are passed on to paying customers. That is a reality I understand. But again, 13.2% is excessive and represents a very real burden to hundreds, if not thousands, of households.

A \$50 increase in an average family's annual bill is significant. As companies expect consumers to pay for increases as the price of doing business escalates, the average consumer does not know your profit margin. This needs to change. If you share information on a potential rate increase, with that should come your budget and simple, clear information about yearly profits and how they are trending. Perhaps some of the money from United Water's profits -- even 1-2% -- or from the CEO's salary (if it is in excess of 800K) could be used to help share some of the burden in covering increased expenses. I am unable to locate any information United Water Idaho's budget or profitability or CEO salaries on their web site. If it is there, the information is not easy to find.

Furthermore, most cities in the U.S. run their water program through the city government. In Idaho Falls, for example, the city runs the water program, not a private company like United Water. A private company, with profits to consider, can increase their rates pending approval by the IPUC, but a city government needs any increase approved by City Council, which is made up of elected officials representing actual rate payers. I feel rate increase decisions are more likely to be made with careful consideration and restraint if the programs are run by the local

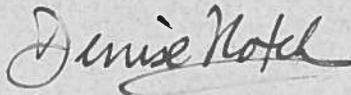
government, not a private company, which has more power to do what they please without approval from officials tied to the local community more directly.

United Water customers received in the mail, but please consider requiring United Water, or any other company proposing an increase, to list the case number in the letter so customers can easily find it, as it is REQUIRED on the on-line form to submit a comment. Due to technical glitches I was not able to submit the form on-line, so I copied and pasted my text into a document. Simple things like including the case number would increase the likelihood you will receive more comments to help guide the decision to approve or reject proposed increase.

I am opposed to such a drastic increase in rates. Boise customers pay a great deal for water compared to other Idaho cities. We moved from Idaho Falls to Boise four years ago and were shocked at the water prices, based on use. I realize charging more for increased use provides an incentive to use less water, helping the community overall, but an average family with a lawn would more than likely need to let it die during the summer to be able to afford to pay for other, more pressing expenses like housing, food, and clothing. As wages fail to increase at the rate of the cost of living each year, the average American family is already struggling to make ends meet. A rate increase of 13.2% is extreme, and whole idea of a private company being in charge of local water use is a bit disconcerting.

Please reconsider and allow an increase at a reduced rate.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Denise Kotek". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name and contact information.

Denise Kotek
1923 S. Ridge Point Way
Boise, ID 83712
turbodsk@gmail.com
208.520.4055