



**STATEMENT FROM DOROTHY BARNETT, DIRECTOR OF THE CLIMATE AND ENERGY PROJECT,
IN RESPONSE TO A PROPOSED SETTLEMENT IN THE WESTAR ENERGY MANDATORY FEE HIKE CASE:**

A proposed settlement agreement announced yesterday between Westar Energy and the Citizens' Utility Ratepayers Board is a welcome step in the right direction. Westar and CURB should be applauded for working together to limit impacts to consumers.

Still, increasing mandatory fixed fees—even at a reduced amount—takes away control over energy costs and options for Kansans and forces costs disproportionately on people who use the least energy. Even with an increase of \$2.50 per month, people will have to pay the higher fees no matter how much energy they use, and they therefore lose control over their energy costs and options. Further, low-income residents living on fixed incomes who use very little energy will have to pay the same as people with large homes that use dramatically more energy.

Westar argues it needs to raise fees to cover its fixed costs, but there are other ways to pay for system upgrades. Other businesses with fixed costs, like grocery stores and gas stations, don't charge mandatory fees. Instead, system costs are reflected in the product price, and consumers can control how much they spend through their purchases.

Instead of raising mandatory fees, we encourage Westar to charge customers for the energy they use. This is the best way to preserve incentives to use less energy and avoid burdening those Kansans who use the least energy with a disproportionate amount of the cost.

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