



MISSOURI SENATE

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Senator Jane Cunningham Supports Continuing State's Energy Discussion

Freshman Senator Offers Amendment to Senate Bill 228 Protecting Senior Citizens from Paying for New Power Plant Construction

JEFFERSON CITY — State Senator Jane Cunningham, R-Chesterfield, has spent many hours researching the heavily debated subject of energy and alternative fuels and the merits of [Senate Bill 228](#), a proposed bill that would allow utilities to charge consumers for part of the interest rates on borrowed funds for the construction phase of certain types of clean energy power plants. The senator's office has been inundated in recent days with hundreds of calls from constituents concerned about possible rate increases if the proposed legislation is approved.

"As you know, proponents and opponents of any legislation advocate their position by supplying information to legislators to help 'sway' the vote and then each legislator must sort through the information, research, and do their due diligence in order to vote in the best interest of their constituency," Sen. Cunningham said. "I've done that, and I support the tenets of this bill and so do the majority of the constituents who made calls to me once they were able to separate the facts from the fiction."

The freshman senator said she is very frustrated by recent misinformation orchestrated by special interest groups distorting the truth and playing on the fears of consumers — particularly senior citizens — with false information about exorbitant rate increases if the bill passes.

"The truth is, consumers would bear only a 1 to 3 percent rate hike for building a new nuclear plant, not 30 to 40 percent as is being reported — which would occur if we do nothing and have to eventually resort to using more costly natural gas and possibly face an exorbitant federal carbon tax for carbon emissions," Sen. Cunningham said. "The facts are clear: Missouri needs to diversify the sources of energy to protect our constituents and their future generations and we cannot stall our efforts in moving forward with building a new nuclear plant. Not doing so means eventually buying power from other states at a higher cost — meaning higher rates for consumers and the increased likelihood of power blackouts. You have to weigh the difference: pay now or pay much more later."

The majority of callers who phoned the senator's office with concerns about the bill were senior citizens from District 7.

"Because my constituents on fixed incomes would be most hurt by a rate increase, I offered an amendment to exempt income-eligible seniors from a utility rate increase during the construction phase," Sen. Cunningham said. "Another proposal offered by a colleague would also extend the exemption to the disabled." "Constituents expressed strong support for my amendment and I was pleased the Senate adopted it," she further stated.

In its current form, Senate Bill 228 also would provide consumer protection requiring AmerenUE to repay customers the cost of the plant plus interest if the power plant or its nuclear permit is transferred or sold. It would also give the Public Service Commission up to a year to initially approve the plant, and another eleven months to review the process.

If the bill receives first-round approval by the Senate, it then requires a second vote of approval before moving to the House for equal consideration.

“The General Assembly needs to debate this bill, improve it with more consumer protections, and move it forward to ensure cleaner, more abundant energy and more affordable electric power for the future,” Sen. Cunningham said. “Key to my decision is affordable, clean power for my constituents.”

For further information about Senator Jane Cunningham and her legislation, you may visit her Senate website at www.senate.mo.gov/cunningham or contact her Chief of Staff, Lucy LePage, at (573) 751-1186.

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