Witness OCS – 3Response

BEFORE THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION OF UTAH

In the Matter of the Voluntary Request)	Docket No. 17-035-39
Of Rocky Mountain Power for Approval)	
Of Resource Decision to Repower)	Response Testimony
Wind Facilities)	of Donna Ramas
)	For the Office of
)	Consumer Services

CONFIDENTIAL RESPONSE TESTIMONY

OF

Donna Ramas

FOR THE OFFICE OF CONSUMER SERVICES

April 2, 2018

REDACTED

1	Q.	WHAT IS YOUR NAME, OCCUPATION AND BUSINESS ADDRESS?
2	Α.	My name is Donna Ramas. I am a Certified Public Accountant licensed in
3		the State of Michigan and Principal at Ramas Regulatory Consulting, LLC,
4		with offices at 4654 Driftwood Drive, Commerce Township, Michigan
5		48382.
6	Q.	HAVE YOU PREVIOUSLY SUBMITTED TESTIMONY IN THIS
7		DOCKET?
8	Α.	Yes. I submitted direct testimony and surrebuttal testimony in this docket
9		on behalf of the Utah Office of Consumer Services (OCS) on September
10		20, 2017 and November 15, 2017, respectively.
11	Q.	WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF YOUR RESPONSE TESTIMONY?
12	Α.	In this case, the Company proposes to establish a Resource Tracking
13		Mechanism ("RTM") to recover the revenue requirement impacts of the
14		proposed wind repowering projects. As part of its original RTM proposal,
15		the Company indicated it would cap the amount being charged to
16		ratepayers through the RTM for the wind repowering projects to the
17		amount of associated cost savings flowing through the energy balancing
18		account (EBA) for the same projects. The cap would result in no net
19		increase in rates charged to customers for the wind repowering projects
20		during the period the proposed RTM would be in place. In other words,
21		the charges flowing through the RTM would not exceed the benefits
22		flowing though the EBA for the wind repowering projects. As part of its
23		original proposal, the Company would not defer any wind repowering

24		project revenue requirements that were in excess of the cost savings
25		flowing through the EBA for future recovery. In the supplemental
26		testimonies of Company witnesses Cindy A. Crane and Joelle R. Steward
27		filed on February 1, 2018, the Company revised its proposal with regards
28		to recovery of the wind repowering project costs from ratepayers,
29		proposing that a portion of the revenue requirements that are in excess of
30		the savings be deferred for recovery through other means. I address the
31		revision to the recovery of costs proposed by the Company in its February
32		1 st supplemental filing.
33	Q.	DO YOU ADDRESS WHETHER OR NOT THE WIND REPOWERING
34		PROJECTS, AS REVISED IN THE COMPANY'S FEBRUARY 1, 2018
35		SUPPLEMENTAL FILING, SHOULD BE APPROVED BY THE
36		COMMISSION AS PRUDENT AND IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST?
37	Α.	No. OCS witness Phil Hayet addresses the wind repowering projects, as
38		revised by the Company, and the Company's request that the projects be
39		approved as prudent and in the public interest in his response testimony.
40		My testimony focuses on RMP's proposed method of recovering the costs
41		associated with the projects from Utah ratepayers outside of a general
42		rate case filing.
43	Q.	IN YOUR DIRECT AND SURREBUTTAL TESTIMONY, YOU
44		RECOMMENDED THAT THE COMPANY'S PROPOSED NEW
45		RESOURCE TRACKING MECHANISM BE REJECTED. DID ANY
46		INFORMATION PRESENTED IN THE COMPANY'S SUPPLEMENTAL

47 TESTIMONIES CAUSE YOU TO MODIFY YOUR POSITION THAT THE 48 RTM SHOULD BE REJECTED?

- 49 A. No, absolutely not. I continue to strongly recommend that the
- 50 Commission reject the proposed new Resource Tracking Mechanism. As
- 51 indicated in both my direct testimony and surrebuttal testimony, there is no
- 52 need to establish a complex recovery mechanism that would shift risk
- away from RMP's shareholders to its ratepayers and add substantial
- 54 complexity to the regulatory process. As already addressed, adequate
- 55 means exist to address the revenue requirements associated with the
- 56 wind repowering projects being considered in this docket without the
- 57 establishment of an RTM if the Company goes forward with the projects,
- 58 the projects are found to be prudent, and the projects cause the Company

59 to not be able to earn its authorized rate of return.

60 Q. DO YOU STILL STAND BEHIND THE RECOMMENDATIONS

61 PRESENTED IN YOUR DIRECT AND SURREBUTTAL TESTIMONIES

- 62 FILED IN THIS PROCEEDING?
- A. Absolutely. As such, the positions and recommendations presented in my
 direct and surrebuttal testimonies will not all be repeated herein.
- 65 As part of my direct and surrebuttal testimonies, I addressed the
- 66 significant risks associated with potential tax reform that was pending at
- 67 the time the testimonies were filed. Since that time, new tax legislation

68		was signed into law ¹ , hereinafter referred to as the Tax Reform Act,
69		alleviating a lot of the tax uncertainty that existed at previous stages in this
70		docket. In its supplemental filing, the Company incorporated the impacts
71		of the Tax Reform Act, among other changes RMP made to the economic
72		analyses associated with the wind repowering projects in this case. The
73		passage of the Tax Reform Act does not change my position that RMP's
74		proposed RTM should be rejected.
75	Q.	IN BOTH YOUR DIRECT AND SURREBUTTAL TESTIMONIES, YOU
76		INDICATE THAT THE COMPANY HAS NOT PROVIDED ANY
77		INFORMATION ADDRESSING WHETHER THE WIND REPOWERING
78		PROJECTS WILL CAUSE IT TO BE UNABLE TO EARN ITS
79		AUTHORIZED RATE OF RETURN IF ITS REQUESTED RTM IS
80		REJECTED. DID THE COMPANY PROVIDE ANY INFORMATION IN
81		ITS SUPPLEMENTAL FILING DEMONSTRATING THAT THE
82		PROPOSED WIND REPOWERING PROJECTS WOULD CAUSE IT TO
83		BE UNABLE TO EARN ITS AUTHORIZED RATE OF RETURN IN THE
84		FIRST FEW YEARS AFTER THE PROJECTS ARE PLACED INTO
85		SERVICE?
86	Α.	No, it did not. Subsequent to the supplemental testimony being issued,

87 the Company was asked in OCS Data Request 13.18 to provide the

¹ On December 22, 2017, President Trump signed "An act to provide for reconciliation pursuant to titles II and V of the concurrent resolution of the budget for fiscal year 2018", also referred to as the "Tax Reform Act", into law.

88 projected rate of return on a total Company and on a Utah jurisdictional 89 basis for 2018 and each subsequent year for which such projections have 90 been made. The Company's response, provided with this testimony as 91 Exhibit OCS 3.1 Response, did not provide the requested information. 92 The Company continues to request a special recovery mechanism 93 to recover the costs at issue in this case associated with the wind 94 repowering costs from ratepayers without providing any evidence 95 demonstrating that it would be unable to earn its authorized rate of return 96 absent the proposed new recovery mechanism. Under the Company's 97 proposal, it could earn in excess of its authorized rate of return during the 98 period the repowered wind assets are in service and the RTM is in place, 99 plus collect additional amounts from its Utah ratepayers via the proposed 100 RTM mechanism and also defer amounts to be recovered from ratepayers 101 through other means.

102 Q. WHAT CHANGE TO THE COMPANY'S PROPOSED RTM WAS

103 PRESENTED IN MS. CRANE'S SUPPLEMENTAL TESTIMONY?

A. The Company has proposed an RTM be established that would include
both the repowered wind assets at issue in this case and the new wind
and new transmission assets at issue in Docket No. 17-035-40. The
Company previously proposed that for the portion of the RTM that is
associated with the repowered wind projects, the RTM be capped such
that ratepayers are not surcharged in any given year should the
repowered wind projects result in a net cost to ratepayers during the

111 period the RTM is in effect. Under the Company's original RTM proposal,

- 112 if the net impact on customers in any given year of the RTM operations is
- 113 negative, or a net increase in costs, the Company would <u>not</u> defer the
- difference for future recovery for the portion of the RTM that is applicable
- to the wind repowering projects. Company witness Jeffrey K. Larsen
- 116 described the RTM in his rebuttal testimony², filed in October 2017, at
- 117 lines 187 193, as follows:

118 The RTM is a tool to capture the costs and benefits of the wind 119 repowering project and fairly treat shareholders and customers, with 120 the protection of a proposed cap. To the extent costs exceed 121 benefits in any given year until the project is fully reflected in rates, 122 the Company bears the risk. In other words, the RTM is 123 asymmetrical in customers' favor and would credit customers with 124 the net benefits of the project annually until the next general rate 125 case. This would have downward pressure on the Company's 126 earnings, to the extent costs exceed the benefits in any given year.

- 127 128
- 129 The supplemental direct testimony of Cindy A. Crane substantially
- 130 changes this prior position, stating on lines 21 25 as follows:
- 131Based on the changes in the federal income tax code, the Company132proposes one refinement to its proposed ratemaking treatment. The133Company requests that the proposed Resource Tracking134Mechanism ("RTM") continue to be capped in the early years, but135that the revenue requirement impact associated with the changes to136the federal tax code that exceed the cap be deferred for future137ratemaking treatment.138

² The direct and rebuttal testimonies of Mr. Jeffrey K. Larsen in this case have been adopted by RMP witness Joelle R. Steward.

139 Thus, now that the economics associated with the project would result in 140 net costs instead of net benefits during the period the proposed RTM 141 would be in effect, the Company no longer agrees to "bear the risk" by not 142 deferring the costs and is no longer proposing that the RTM be 143 "asymmetrical in customers' favor" as originally asserted by RMP witness 144 Larsen. Now that the wind repowering projects are not economic in the 145 early years as originally projected due to changes in tax law, the Company 146 no longer proposes to bear the risk. Rather, it now wants to defer a 147 portion of the excess costs during the term the RTM would be in place. 148 This deferral would occur under the Company's proposal even if the 149 Company earns in excess of its authorized rate of return in the periods the 150 RTM would be in place. 151 Q. SINCE THE COMPANY HAS MODIFIED ITS PROPOSAL TO NO 152 LONGER FULLY BEAR THE RISKS DURING THE PERIOD THE RTM

153IS IN PLACE, WAS THE COMPANY ASKED IF IT WOULD BE WILLING154TO INCLUDE A CAP WITH ITS PROPOSED RTM THAT TAKES INTO

155 CONSIDERATION THE OVERALL RATE OF RETURN BEING EARNED

156BY THE COMPANY?

A. Yes. OCS Data Request 13.6 posed the following question: "Would the
Company be willing to implement an RTM that includes a cap such that if
the RTM or the deferrals proposed in the RTM would cause the Company
to earn in excess of its currently authorized rate of return, then the amount
either deferred or flowing through the RTM would exclude the portion that

- 162 would cause the Company to earn in excess of its authorized rate of
- 163 return?" The Company responded as follows:
- 164No. The Company believes this would result in an asymmetrical165earnings test specifically targeted to keep equity earnings below166currently authorized returns without the possibility of a similar167opportunity to increase equity under-earnings up to the currently168authorized return when so warranted.
- 170 The Company's proposed RTM is very one-sided to provide RMP
- 171 recovery of costs associated with the wind repowering projects until the
- 172 next rate case following the projects being placed into service regardless
- 173 of the Company's overall earnings.

169

- 174 Q. HOW DOES RMP WITNESS JOELLE R. STEWARD ADDRESS THE
- 175 CHANGES IN THE RTM BEING PROPOSED BY RMP IN THE

176 SUPPLEMENTAL PHASE OF THIS DOCKET?

- A. Confusingly, at lines 102 through 105 of her supplemental testimony, Ms.
- 178 Steward indicates that the Company is not proposing changes in the RTM
- 179 "...for interim ratemaking treatment." However, she continues at lines 106
- 180 through 122 of her testimony to discuss proposed changes to allow
- 181 deferral of costs for recovery by the Company, with recovery occurring by
- 182 offsetting new deferrals with the impacts of tax reform being addressed in
- 183 another docket. Clearly the Company has modified its RTM proposal to
- allow it to now recover amounts associated with wind repowering projects
- 185 since it now projects net costs instead of net benefits during the period the
- 186 RTM would be in place.

187 Q. COULD YOU PLEASE ELABORATE ON THE NEW PROPOSAL, AS

- 188 DESCRIBED BY RMP WITNESS STEWARD?
- 189 Α. Yes. Ms. Steward indicates that the Company now proposes to 190 "...separately defer the net costs in excess of the cap associated with tax 191 law changes, and seek recovery through an offset to the deferral for the 192 impacts from tax reform, pending in Docket No. 17-035-69." Thus, instead 193 of sticking with the "asymmetrical" RTM the Company originally proposed 194 and bearing the risk previously addressed in Mr. Larsen's rebuttal 195 testimony, the Company now proposes to recover additional amounts 196 during the period the RTM would be in place by deferring costs and 197 recovering the deferrals through another means. Apparently the Company 198 will propose in Docket No. 17-035-69 to reduce the amounts due to 199 ratepayers as a result of the Tax Reform Act to enable it to recover 200 additional wind repowering costs from customers outside of a general rate 201 case.
- 202 Q. HOW WOULD THE NEW DEFERRAL INTRODUCED IN THE
- 203 COMPANY'S SUPPLEMENTAL FILING BE DETERMINED?

A. In response to OCS Data Request 13.10, the Company explains that:
"The additional Tax Reform Deferral is calculated by subtracting the cap
benefit using the previous 35 percent federal tax rate from the cap benefit
using the Tax Reform 21 percent federal tax rate" and that "[t]he cap
benefit difference is the amount to be deferred and addressed in the Tax

209 Reform docket." Essentially, during the term the proposed RTM is in

210	place the Company will calculate what the revenue requirements
211	associated with the wind repowering projects would have been if the
212	federal corporate income tax rate had stayed at 35% and compare that to
213	the revenue requirements under the actual 21% federal corporate income
214	tax rate. The table below is from the attachment provided with the
215	Company's response to OCS Data Request 13.10:
216	

Example Calculation of Additional RTM Cap Adjustment due to Federal Tax Law Change

				2019	2020	2021	2022
		1	JRS-2SD @ 21% Fed				
		Cap Benefit @ 21% Tax Rate	Tax, -(line 24-line 23) JRS-2SD @ 35% Fed	952	9,132	3,664	-
		² Cap Benefit @ 35% Tax Rate	Tax, -(line 22-line 23)	_	3,409	-	-
		3 Additional Deferral until Tax Reform Case	line 1 - line 2	952	5,722	3,664	-
217		4 Cumulative Tax Reform Additional Deferral	Cumulative of line 3	952	6,674	10,339	10,339
218		Under the example provided by the	e Company, it wou	ıld be a	ble to re	ecover	
219		an additional \$10,339,000 from cu	stomers above an	d beyor	nd the a	mount	
220		to be recovered through its propos	ed RTM by reduc	ing the a	amount	that	
221		will otherwise be due to customers	in Docket No. 17	-035-69). This a	amount	
222		was re-affirmed in response to DPU Data Request 23.4 in which the					
223		Company indicated that it estimate	ed the amount of a	dditiona	al deferr	al to	
224		be \$10.3 million. This would result	t in additional amo	ounts re	covered	by the	
225		Company from ratepayers outside	of a general rate	case.			
226	Q.	IN YOUR DIRECT TESTIMONY, Y	OU TESTIFIED 1	THAT IF	THE W	/IND	
227		REPOWERING PROJECTS ARE	FOUND TO BE P	RUDEN	NT AND		

228 CAUSE THE COMPANY TO BE UNABLE TO EARN ITS AUTHORIZED

RETURN, ADEQUATE MEANS EXIST TO ADDRESS THE REVENUE
 REQUIREMENTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE PROJECTS WITHOUT THE
 NEED TO ESTABLISH A COMPLEX RECOVERY MECHANISM. DOES
 THE NEW DEFERRAL PROPOSED FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THE
 COMPANY'S SUPPLEMENTAL FILING INCREASE THE COMPLEXITY
 OF THE COMPANY'S PROPOSED RECOVERY?

- 235 Α. Absolutely. In addition to the unnecessary complexities associated with 236 the proposed Resource Tracking Mechanism addressed in my direct 237 testimony, additional calculations would now be made under the 238 Company's proposal. In addition to the substantial assumptions and 239 calculations used in calculating the Company's proposed annual Resource 240 Tracking Mechanism filing and surcharge amounts, the annual filing will 241 now include further calculations that essentially "pretend" that the 35% 242 federal income tax rate is still in effect and compare the results to the 243 calculations using the actual federal income tax rate. It also increases the 244 complexity in another docket, Docket No. 17-035-69, in which the impacts 245 of tax reform are being considered and would introduce a new deferral in 246 that docket that would need to be considered by the parties.
- 247 Q. PREVIOUSLY IN THIS TESTIMONY, YOU INDICATED THAT THE
- 248 ECONOMICS ASSOCIATED WITH THE WIND REPOWERING
- 249 PROJECTS NOW RESULT IN NET COSTS INSTEAD OF NET
- 250 BENEFITS DURING THE PERIOD THE PROPOSED RTM WOULD BE
- 251 IN PLACE. WOULD YOU PLEASE ELABORATE?

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A. Yes. The reduction to the corporate federal income tax rate resulting from the Tax Reform Act, reducing the rate from 35% to 21%, has a substantial impact on the revenue requirements associated with the wind repowering projects proposed in this docket. The table below shows the anticipated revenue requirement impacts associated with the RTM as contained in the Company's direct testimony, in its rebuttal testimony, and in its supplemental testimony:

Revenue Requirements - Utah Allocated Basis

	2019	2020	2021
Direct Testimony	(2,531)	2,735	(4,012)
Rebuttal Testimony	(1,138)	(737)	(7,433)
Supplemental Testimony	952	9,132	3,664

260

259

261 In response to OCS Data Request 13.12, the Company indicates that it 262 currently anticipates it will file its next general rate case during calendar 263 year 2020 with a 2021 test year. Thus, the above table presents the 264 revenue requirement impacts associated with the proposed new wind 265 repowering projects through 2021, which presumably would extend 266 beyond the period the proposed RTM would be in effect. As is clear from 267 the above table, the Tax Reform Act had a substantial impact on the 268 revenue requirements associated with the wind repowering projects during 269 the years the RTM will potentially be in effect under the Company's 270 proposal. The Company has revised its RTM at this late stage to allow it 271 to defer the negative impacts of the Tax Reform Act on its projected

272 revenue requirements associated with the wind repowering projects for273 recovery from ratepayers.

274 It is interesting to note that in her rebuttal testimony, filed in October 275 2017, Ms. Crane stated in lines 72 – 75 that the economic analysis for the 276 years 2019 through 2022 estimated "...a Utah customer net benefit in 277 each year, with the net benefits of up to \$12.4 million by 2022" and that 278 under the proposed RTM "...these benefits will flow directly to customers." 279 Now that those net benefits are a net cost for that same period, the 280 Company is removing the previously offered "cap" in the portion of the 281 RTM associated with the wind repowering projects such that a portion of 282 the net costs will be deferred to be recovered from ratepayers through 283 another docket.

284 Q. TO BE ABUNDENTLY CLEAR, IS IT STILL YOUR POSITION THAT

285 THE COMPANY'S PROPOSED RTM SHOULD BE REJECTED?

286 Α. Yes. I continue to recommend that the Company's proposed RTM be 287 rejected, as well as the new deferrals to be calculated in conjunction with the RTM that were proposed by the Company for the first time in its 288 289 supplemental filing. As indicated in my direct testimony, if RMP goes 290 forward with the projects, the projects are found to be prudent, and the 291 projects cause RMP to earn below its authorized rate of return, adequate 292 means exist for the Company to recover its prudently incurred costs 293 without the need to implement a complex new recovery mechanism. There is nothing precluding the Company from filing a general rate case 294

295 should it determine that the projects at issue in this docket, as well as the 296 new wind and new transmission projects at issue in Docket No. 17-035-297 40, would cause the Company to be unable to earn a fair and reasonable 298 rate of return. In such a general rate case, parties would have the 299 opportunity to review all factors impacting the Company's revenue 300 requirements rather than focusing on select projects of RMP's choosing in 301 isolation, akin to single-issue-ratemaking, that could result in a distorted 302 view of the Company's overall revenue needs.

303 Q. IN YOUR SURREBUTTAL TESTIMONY, FILED ON NOVEMBER 15,

304 2017, YOU RECOMMENDED THAT IF THE COMMISSION APPROVES

305 ANY OF THE REPOWERING PROJECTS IN THIS CASE, THAT THE

306 AMOUNT OF APPROVED PROJECT COSTS BE BASED ON THE

307 UTAH JURISDICTIONAL AMOUNT. WOULD YOU PLEASE DISCUSS

308 THIS RECOMMENDATION PRESENTED IN YOUR SURREBUTTAL

309 TESTIMONY?

310 Α. Yes. Starting at line 494 of my surrebuttal testimony, I expressed my 311 understanding that there is currently a Multi-State Process underway 312 considering changes to the allocation of costs between the various 313 jurisdictions in which PacifiCorp operates. This has been referred to as 314 the MSP. It is my current understanding that there is a high level of 315 uncertainty associated with the MSP placing greater risk on Utah 316 ratepayers regarding the portion of the costs associated with the wind 317 repowering projects that they will ultimately be asked to be responsible for, 318 as well as the uncertainty in the MSP regarding the portion of the benefits 319 associated with the zero cost wind energy and PTC credits Utah 320 ratepayers will receive. Thus, I recommended that the Commission find 321 that the amount considered to be the approved costs in this case under 322 Section 54-17-4029(7)(a) be based on a Utah jurisdictional amount. 323 I recommend that the Commission approved repowering projects, if 324 any are approved, be capped at the Commission determined Utah 325 jurisdictional amount in this case with costs exceeding that Utah 326 jurisdictional cap excluded from rates charged to Utah ratepayers. This 327 would further protect Utah ratepayers should the Commission approve all 328 or a portion of the wind repowering projects and the jurisdictional 329 allocation process changes such that the projects are no longer beneficial 330 or economic for Utah ratepayers. The Company has consistently applied 331 a Utah SG jurisdictional factor of 42.6283% to the capital costs in the 332 revenue requirement analyses it has presented in this case.³ If the Commission approves a subset of the proposed wind repowering projects. 333 334 it could apply the 42.6283% jurisdictional allocation factor to the per-335 project capital costs presented in Confidential Exhibit RMP__TJH-1SD 336 included with the supplemental testimony of RMP witness Timothy J. 337 Hemstreet in determining the cap.

³ The Utah SG factor of 42.6283% is reflected in the Company's supplemental filing in Exhibit RMP__(JRS-2SD) and Exhibit RMP__(JRS-4SD).

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338

Q.

339		PROJECT COSTS REQUESTED BY THE COMPANY, AS WELL AS
340		COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH A SUBSET OF THE PROJECTS
341		REQUESTED, ON A UTAH JURISDICTIONAL BASIS. HAVE THOSE
342		AMOUNTS CHANGED AS A RESULT OF THE COMPANY'S
343		SUPPLEMENTAL FILING AND THE OFFICE'S RESPONSE
344		TESTIMONY THERETO?
345	Α.	Yes. At lines 70 – 73 of his supplemental testimony, Company witness
346		Rick T. Link indicates that the updated capital investment for the wind
347		repowering project is now \$1.101 billion. Based on the Utah SG
348		jurisdictional factor of 42.6283%, the Utah jurisdictional amount associated
349		with the now updated capital investment projection for the repowering
350		projects, in their entirety, would be \$469.3 million.
351		In his response testimony, Office witness Phil Hayet recommends
352		that the Commission deny the Company's repowering request as he does
353		not believe the Company has proven that the projects will most likely
354		result in the acquisition, production and delivery of electricity to Utah
355		customers at the lowest reasonable cost and least risk possible. Mr.
356		Hayet also provided an analysis of the most cost-effective subset of
357		projects to repower should the Commission be inclined to permit the
358		Company to proceed with the repowering of wind projects. Based on his
359		analysis, Mr. Hayet determined that a portfolio of six of the twelve
360		proposed projects were more cost effective. As indicated in Mr. Hayet's

IN YOUR SURREBUTTAL TESTIMONY, YOU PROVIDED THE

361	response testimony, the projected up-front capital cost for the six projects
362	is ***BEGIN CONFIDENTIAL***
363	If the Commission were to approve these six projects, the Utah
364	jurisdictional amount, based on the 42.6283% Utah SG factor, would be
365	***BEGIN CONFIDENTIAL***
366 Q .	DOES THIS COMPLETE YOUR PREFILED RESPONSE TESTIMONY?
367 A.	Yes.