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# Office of Consumer Services

UTAH DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

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To: The Public Service Commission of Utah  
From: The Office of Consumer Services  
Michele Beck, Director  
Alex Ware, Utility Analyst

Date: October 19, 2022  
Subject: Docket 22-057-13

**In the Matter of:** Application of Dominion Energy Utah for an Adjustment to the Low Income Assistance / Energy Assistance Rate

## INTRODUCTION

On September 30, 2022, Dominion Energy Utah (DEU) submitted a filing to the Public Service Commission of Utah (PSC) of its request for an adjustment to the Energy Assistance Fund. On October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2022, the PSC issued a Scheduling Order and Notice of Hearing establishing that interested parties may submit initial comments about the filing on or before October 19, 2022 and reply comments on or before October 21, 2022. In addition, a hearing is scheduled for October 24, 2022. The Office of Consumer Services (OCS) provides the following comments pursuant to that schedule.

## BACKGROUND

DEU's filing in this docket is made under the Energy Assistance Fund section of the tariff, which outlines how adjustments in recovery costs may be made to maintain the \$1.5 million annual funding level target. DEU is proposing to donate some of the fund's unspent balances to the low-income weatherization program, which is addressed in the next section.

## FUND DONATION TO THE LOW-INCOME WEATHERIZATION PROGRAM

DEU reports that the annual participation numbers in the low-income Energy Assistance Fund have been on the decline in recent years resulting in a year-end balance of over

\$850,000. Therefore, the Company is proposing to donate the bulk of the balance to another program that serves DEU's low-income customers by funding home weatherization. In total, DEU proposes that \$751,147 be contributed to the low-income weatherization program. If approved by the PSC, an initial donation of \$250,000 would be done within 30 days of the order in this docket. Then, before the remaining balance of the donation is transferred, DEU will assess if there is cause to modify the donation if there is an unexpected increase in the participation of the Energy Assistance program this year.

## **OCS DISCUSSION**

As accurately stated by DEU in its application in this docket, the Company met with the OCS and the Division of Public Utilities (DPU) on August 24, 2022 to discuss the idea to donate unused surplus from the Energy Assistance program to the low-income weatherization program. The OCS agreed at that time with DPU representatives that DEU's proposal seems reasonable as the intent of the funds, to help low-income customers, is preserved. The OCS notes that a donation from the Energy Assistance Fund to the low-income weatherization program is for this program year only and will not recur annually. Also, the OCS supports designing the donation in two parts to ensure funding can still be available to address an increase in Energy Assistance program participation, even if it appears unlikely. The OCS notes that we anticipate a significant increase in natural gas bills this upcoming heating season based on current filings coming after last heating season's natural gas bills were nearly twenty percent higher than the previous one. In total, this is a notable impact on bills and may increase interest in the Energy Assistance program.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

The OCS recommends that the PSC approve DEU's proposal to transfer surplus Energy Assistance program funds to the low-income weatherization program.

cc:

Kelly Mendenhall, Dominion Energy Utah

Austin Summers, Dominion Energy Utah

Jenniffer Clark, Dominion Energy Utah

Chris Parker, Division of Public Utilities

Service List