

Hiep Nguyen

From: Ellen Plendl
Sent: Monday, February 20, 2023 8:23 AM
To: Consumer Correspondence
Subject: Docket No. 20230000
Attachments: more investigations!; explanationsapologies!; FloridaPeopleLose!; Florida Power and Light shame on you!; Florida Power and Light poor behavior continues!

See attached customer correspondence and reply for Docket No. 20230000.

Hiep Nguyen

From: Beatrice Balboa <beatricebalboa@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, February 2, 2023 11:36 AM
To: Ellen Plendl
Subject: more investigations?!
Attachments: City Council opens investigation of mayor candidate LeAnna Cumber.pdf

Thursday 2 February 2023 1130 hours

Ellen Plendl
Regulatory Consultant
Florida Public Service Commission
Office of Consumer Assistance & Outreach
1-800-342-3552 (phone)
1-800-511-0809 (fax)

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to express my ongoing deepest disappointment that the electrical utility industrial sector continues to mismanage the electrical infrastructure throughout the State of Florida despite given unfettered access to elected and appointed government officials and agencies in the furtherance of policies and agendas, which consist of pursuing poorly thought out sourcing of energy resources and a decidedly anti-consumer stance with the rate-paying public across the board. Ongoing investigations continue undercover the long-standing practices by these captains of industry to extract ever larger fees and electrical rates to aggrandize their oversized ambitions by direct and indirect political arrangements in backrooms.

The attached documentation clearly indicates the ongoing conditions of the electrical infrastructure in the State of Florida as well as the lengths to which these captains of industry try to influence governmental policy makers.

Please place these observations and articles in the appropriate docket to underscore the overwhelmingly calculated cold-hearted manner that these captains seem to influence the very elected/appointed representatives that should, instead, be seeking to comfort their constituents day-to-day hardships to pay for the aggrandizement of these out sized economic sectors.

Thank you for your time in these matters and hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,
Beatrice Balboa
1010 South Ocean Boulevard, Unit 1008
Pompano Beach, FL 33062-6631
USA

City Council to investigate whether LeAnna Cumber 'deceived or misled' regarding JEA sale



[David Bauerlein](#)

Florida Times-Union

City Council President Terrance Freeman on Wednesday opened an investigation into whether City Council member LeAnna Cumber "deceived or misled" the council about her husband's involvement in helping a firm that submitted a privatization offer for JEA in 2019.

The investigation of Cumber comes as she is running for mayor in the spring election. An attorney for Cumber called it a "manufactured controversy."

Freeman said he was reactivating the council's Special Investigatory Committee on JEA Matters because documents "have come to light" that warrant more investigation. He said one of the charges for the committee will be to determine whether Cumber "attempted to use her official position" in order to influence the sales process "for personal gain."

Cumber has said her husband was never employed or paid by any entity interested in the sale of JEA.

More: Jacksonville City Council president gets request to investigate mayoral candidate Cumber

Ads wars in mayor's race: Jacksonville mayor candidates charge the other cannot be trusted after JEA sales attempt

Jacksonville mayoral field: Field of candidates set for race that already has raised \$10 million

Daniel Nunn, an attorney who supports Cumber in the mayor's race, said the investigation is politically driven by Mayor Lenny Curry and JAX Chamber President Daniel Davis, who is running for mayor.

"This manufactured controversy exposes the lengths to which Mayor Curry and his chosen successor will go to win," Nunn said in a statement released by the Cumber campaign. "As a lawyer who investigated the JEA scandal, I found no misconduct by any member of the City Council."

Nunn did not work for the Special Investigatory Committee, which used Steve Busey as its special counsel with assistance from Smith Hulsey & Busey attorneys. The Nelson Mullins law firm, where Nunn is an attorney, represented JEA when it filed a lawsuit against fired JEA CEO Aaron Zahn.

Freeman said City Council members have been "working hard to restore the trust of the public into our government process."

"I thought this was the best way to have a process that offers the council member in question and the company in question the opportunity to clear the record so we can continue to move forward," Freeman said. "To me, it's not about politics. It was about principal."

During the Special Investigatory Committee's probe in 2020, the committee issued subpoenas to the bidders asking them to list lobbyists, attorneys and consultants they employed in connection with JEA's invitation to submit offers for the utility.

JEA Public Power Partners responded with a June 1, 2020, letter that said in the case of Cumber's husband, Husein, an "affiliate of a JEA PPP consortium member performed due diligence on potentially retaining Husein Cumber as a consultant but did not do so as there was a perceived or actual conflict."

The Special Investigative Committee later requested all council members to voluntarily list any interactions their immediate family members, including spouses, had with people or entities connected in any way with the JEA process.

Cumber turned in a disclosure statement that did not have any mention of Husein Cumber on it.

Emails obtained by the Florida Times-Union show Husein Cumber assisted a private equity firm when it was assembling the consortium of companies called JEA Public Power Partners. Freeman's announcement also makes reference to text messages.

Mike Weinstein, who worked as a paid consultant for on the consortium, has said Husein Cumber "would occasionally give advice" and also was a "connecting go-between" for people. Weinstein has said Husein Cumber "went out of his way" to explain he wasn't being paid and did not have any future expectation of being paid.

Unlike other proposals for JEA in 2019, JEA Public Power Partners would have paid a large concession fee for the right to manage JEA but the utility would have remained city-owned.

Committee will have limited scope for investigation

Freeman said the Special Investigatory Committee will be able to use the subpoena power it had during its initial investigation. He said the scope of its investigation will be limited to three items:

- Investigate whether LeAnna Cumber or JEA Public Powers "deceived or misled" the Special Investigative Committee.

- Determine whether Cumber tried to use her position as a City Council member for "personal gain."

- Propose legislation to "ensure such deceptions, if any" would not hurt the work of any future investigatory committee.

Sixteen City Council members turned in their voluntary disclosure statements in September 2020 and Cumber filed hers in March 2021. Two council members, Danny Becton and Aaron Bowman, did not file disclosure

statements. The committee's investigation will not examine any other council members besides Cumber.

Nunn said if Freeman is going to reopen the Special Investigatory Committee, it should "explore the non-disclosure by Chamber employee Bowman." Bowman is an executive with JAX Chamber.

Nunn said the committee also should investigate a job offer that former City Council member Garrett Dennis received in mid-2019 to work for a marijuana decriminalization group and what the Curry administration knew about it.

Dennis, who would be a fierce critic of the JEA sales process after it started, told the Times-Union in 2021 that the job possibly would have paid him \$250,000 but he would have had to resign from City Council. Florida Power & Light previously confirmed that employees of the consulting firm Matrix came up with the idea of offering the job to Dennis but FPL said that was "flatly rejected."

Freeman said he decided to reopen the Special Investigatory Committee's work in light of recent media reports about Husein Cumber's involvement with the firm that put in an offer for JEA. City Council member Rory Diamond told Action News Jax he thought there should be an investigation and council member Nick Howland sent Freeman a letter on Monday requesting a City Council investigation.

Freeman and Davis have had professional and political ties. Freeman served in 2014-15 as political affairs manager at JAX Chamber while Davis was the chamber's CEO. When Freeman ran for City Council in 2019, his campaign received a \$1,000 contribution from Building a Better Economy, the political committee for Davis.

Freeman said he has not taken a position in the mayor's race.

"My job right now when I sit on the council is to do the best I can for the citizens of Jacksonville and try to remain focused on the task at hand," he said.

Freeman said he will soon announce which council members will serve on the Special Investigatory Committee.

Hiep Nguyen

From: Beatrice Balboa <beatricebalboa@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, February 9, 2023 8:31 AM
To: Ellen Plendl
Subject: explanations/apologies?!
Attachments: Where do NextEra's victims go for their apology.pdf

Thursday 9 February 2023 0830 hours

Ellen Plendl
Regulatory Consultant
Florida Public Service Commission
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To whom it may concern,

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USA

Where do NextEra's victims go for their apology? | Pat Beall

By Pat Beall

South Florida Sun Sentinel

•
Feb 07, 2023 at 1:46 pm

NextEra Energy, the parent company of Florida Power & Light, saw stock prices drop 11% in 10 days after the Securities and Exchange Commission disclosed the departure of FPL CEO Eric Silagy.

Usually, when the diners are satisfied and the reviews are glowing, you don't see the chef tossing his toque and walking out the door. And you don't see the owners holding it open for him.

Pension fund investors and mom-and-pop shareholders alike were satisfied with the stock profits served up by Florida Power & Light on CEO Eric Silagy's watch.

Why, if it weren't for the dark money, the Federal Elections Commission complaint, the fake candidates and the ABC news reporter-who-wasn't, you would almost be sorry to see him go.

Silagy abruptly announced his resignation Jan. 25. His leave-taking comes after The Orlando Sentinel, the Florida Times-Union, NPR, The Guardian, The Miami Herald and others revealed ties among FPL, Alabama consulting firm Matrix LLC and a web of dark money spending to aid GOP candidates in three state Senate races, undermine solar power and much, much more.

Our personal favorite? Hiring a private investigator to follow a reporter critical of FPL. "Boring!" moaned a Matrix employee after the reporter failed to drive drunk after a wedding.

Pat Beall is now an editorial writer and columnist for the Sun Sentinel, focusing mainly on Palm Beach County issues.

Matrix and its alleged dark money operatives fiddling in Florida elections, not FPL, are at the heart of a campaign finance violation complaint filed with the Federal Elections Commission by Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, an advocacy group.

But FPL's money, and Silagy's role in distributing it, run through a cache of internal Matrix documents.

We don't know if Silagy regrets any or all of it. We don't know if the FEC will ever-so-slightly shift its bureaucratic bulk to weigh in or simply shrug: Another day, another dark money scandal.

It could take a year or more before we find out.

So long as it's waiting, NextEra Energy, FPL's parent company, might use that time to write apology notes. It can start with innocent bystanders, including every

Theodore Hayes, everywhere. According to reports, Silagy sometimes used an email alias of Theodore Hayes when communicating with Matrix.

Well, sure. If your goal is, as one Matrix memo suggested, to “minimize all public reporting” of FPL campaign activity, then a fake ID is a swell idea.

But consider the Miami cook Theodore Hayes and the Baltimore broadcaster Theo Hayes; the Theodore Hayeses everywhere whose answering machines suddenly filled up with complaints about utility bills.

Some took it better than others. One such “Theodore Hayes,” after stating he is not Eric Silagy on his LinkedIn page, added: “I steal elections and all your money.”

Apologies to all.

Toby Overdorf could use a “sorry” too. In 2018, an ABC news producer confronted Florida House of Representatives candidate Toby Overdorf about 20 dead gopher tortoises at a construction site where he served as a wildlife consultant. The video story that followed showed a flustered Overdorf with no explanation.

This, in all likelihood, was because there were no gopher tortoises, a city investigation found. Not dead. Or alive.

But then, there was also no ABC journalist. The woman did freelance work for the network but wasn’t there for the nightly news. According to NPR and Floodlight, the woman was on the payroll of Matrix. And Matrix had noted payments to her “for Florida Crystals, FPL.”

For what Matrix financial documents indicate was FPL’s partial support for making political props of innocent gopher tortoises, a threatened species with enough problems on its plate, a partial apology would be acceptable.

Apologies, too, to anyone holding a share of NextEra stock on Jan. 24. On Jan. 25, Securities and Exchange Commission filings made public Silagy’s resignation and NextEra’s conclusion that no campaign finance laws had been broken. Everything was going to be fine, just fine, the company said in a conference call.

But Wall Street’s gotta Wall Street, and share price plunged 11% in 10 days. Between Jan. 24, the day before the SEC filings hit the fan, and Jan. 26, a person holding 1,000 shares of NextEra lost more than \$7,000 in market equity. Sorry!

NextEra has emphasized it is filing a robust response to the FEC complaint. It refutes the idea it ran afoul of campaign laws. It indicated Silagy’s departure had nothing to do with the news reports.

Even if there was a problem, the total campaign contributions at issue totaled less than \$1.3 million, the company told analysts. “We do not expect that allegations of federal campaign finance law violations taken as a whole would be material to us.”

But it has already made a material difference.

It has damped goodwill created by memories of those mile-long lines of utility trucks coming to turn the lights back on after a hurricane. Among responsible reporters, it has cast shade on the company's credibility. It has given groups opposing FPL policies more ammunition for their fight.

In other words: Just desserts.

Hiep Nguyen

From: Beatrice Balboa <beatricebalboa@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, February 11, 2023 10:24 AM
To: Ellen Plendl
Subject: FloridaPeopleLose?!
Attachments: Friday's Afternoon Update - Florida Trend.pdf; EREC Members To See Lower Electric Bills _ NorthEscambia.com.pdf; 'Everyone Has a Right to Electricity and Heat' - FAIR.pdf

Saturday 11 February 2023 1030 hours

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Florida Supreme Court questions state's approval of rate hike for FPL

State Supreme Court justices have questioned whether regulators adequately justified the approval of a settlement that increased base electric rates for Florida Power & Light. The Supreme Court heard arguments in two challenges to the Florida Public Service Commission's approval in late 2021 of the four-year settlement, which began increasing FPL customers' rates last year. FPL reached the settlement with the state Office of Public Counsel, which represents consumers in utility issues, and other parties including the Florida Retail Federation, the Florida Industrial Power Users Group and the Southern Alliance for Clean Energy. More from the [Miami Herald](#).

EREC Members To See Lower Electric Bills

February 10, 2023



Escambia River Electric Cooperative members will see lower bills.

The “fuel cost adjustment” on member bills will drop to zero.

For EREC’s average resident customer using 1,450 kilowatt-hours per month, the savings will equate to about \$30 a month.

According to EREC, about 40% of a member’s monthly bill goes toward fuel costs for PowerSouth – EREC’s wholesale power provider. PowerSouth uses that fuel to generate electricity which EREC then distributes to homes and businesses. If the cost of that fuel goes up, the price EREC pays for electricity rises with it. In recent months natural gas, one of the most important fuel sources for PowerSouth, has reached its highest price in over a decade.

“Natural gas prices have nearly tripled, but we are continually looking for ways to keep costs down for our members,” said Ryan Campbell, EREC’s CEO. “We are able to cut certain costs and divert projects to a later date to help weather the storm.”

The cooperative said now that the cost of natural gas is decreasing, EREC is keeping their promise to pass the savings on to members and lower the cost of electricity.

“As a not-for-profit cooperative, we always work to provide reliable electric service at an affordable price,” said Campbell.

EREC serves about 10,000 members in northern Escambia and Santa Rosa counties with 1,800 miles of energized line.

Pictured: EREC’s Walnut Hill Office. [NorthEscambia.com](#) photo, [click to enlarge](#).

Comments

15 Responses to “EREC Members To See Lower Electric Bills”

1. Willis on February 10th, 2023 10:16 pm

EREC cooperative not for profit.

fpl. FOR PROFIT LEROY

2. Unhappy FPL Customer in Molino on February 10th, 2023 7:55 pm

To Vee Dee

Hahahaha! FLORIDA PILLAGE and LOOT! Perfect! Wish I'd thought of that! They are the worst!

3. Unhappy FPL Customer in Molino on February 10th, 2023 7:54 pm

To Vee Dee

Hahahaha!

4. Vee Dee on February 10th, 2023 2:27 pm

PLEASE bring EREC to Cantonment!!!! So tired of Florida Pillage and Loot!!!!

5. Kane on February 10th, 2023 11:30 am

FloridaPeopleLose is a giant company which goal is to make money. That's its only goal, its purpose is not to bring you power, not to serve the community, not to care for your needs. It only makes money like ALL large companies of any nature. They will never care for any of us like a small wholesome community supplier like E.R.E.C and they are providing internet to boot sounds like I need to move.

6. Ronald McGee on February 10th, 2023 10:30 am

We really enjoyed having EREC I believe that they are a customer comes first organization keep up the good work and lower the cost if possible

7. EMD on February 10th, 2023 10:27 am

Best power company ever, and the employees are really nice too. In addition, we can speak with real people who can be understood. Thank you EREC.

8. Molino Resident on February 10th, 2023 9:48 am

How refreshing. I would love to see what the comparative rates for are between EREC and FPL per kilowatt hour.

9. Bill T on February 10th, 2023 9:16 am

I think FPL should take notice!!!! Apparently these people are doing it right !!! Unfortunately FPL continues to try and break the people of Florida!!!! The average power bill in Florida has gone up by 25 to 29 percent in the last year!!!! And now they want more!!! Looks like we are getting ripped off here in Florida everyday!!!!

10. derek on February 10th, 2023 8:46 am

Eat your heart out FPL

11. tg on February 10th, 2023 8:29 am

Could they share that formula with FPL..

12. Swamp Gas on February 10th, 2023 8:11 am

Thank you ERIC. So glad that I don't have Fl power and lite.

13. Molino Resident on February 10th, 2023 7:18 am

Glad to see there is a power company out there that is willing to help their customers by actually lowering costs. Too bad Florida Power and Light can't seem to do that. They must need that extra money something bad.

14. Power to the people on February 10th, 2023 6:46 am

I just offset the monthly amount I pay to FPL by buying their company stock. I figured since they are generating an extra profit by raising rates, I can get free power without adding solar just by moving some money around. Thanks everyone for the free cash!!

15. Unhappy FPL Customer in Molino on February 10th, 2023 2:17 am

Seems us under FPL service are constantly being charged for less service yet paying for greater company profits and any extra costs they decide to through at us. What a rip off. Should've moved out further and could be with EREC. FPL should take note. Perhaps we can gather signatures or vote them (FPL) out and get EREC to cover the Molino area. FPL is charging us so they can build the eyesores of the left's dreams; solar farms, in our area. Bad, bad news!

FAIR

Challenging media bias since 1986.

FEBRUARY 10, 2023

'Everyone Has a Right to Electricity and Heat'

CounterSpin interview with Shelby Green and Selah Goodson Bell on utility shutoffs and profiteering

JANINE JACKSON



*Janine Jackson interviewed the Energy and Policy Institute's Shelby Green and the Center for Biological Diversity's Selah Goodson Bell about utility shutoffs and profiteering for the February 3, 2023, episode of **CounterSpin**. This is a lightly edited transcript.*

CounterSpin230203Green_Bell.mp3

Janine Jackson: Some 4 million US households have had their electricity cut off in recent years. But before you say "Russia" or "Covid," our guests would have you understand that it

has something to do with the utility business model that we use in this country, for energy and electricity, and that that model is broken, and worthy of reconsideration.

Shelby Green is research fellow at the Energy and Policy Institute. Selah Goodson Bell is energy justice campaigner at the Center for Biological Diversity, and they're both behind a new report called *Powerless* that is out from Biological Diversity and Bailout Watch. They both join us by phone. I'm happy to have you here, Shelby Green and Selah Goodson Bell.

Selah Goodson Bell: Happy to join.

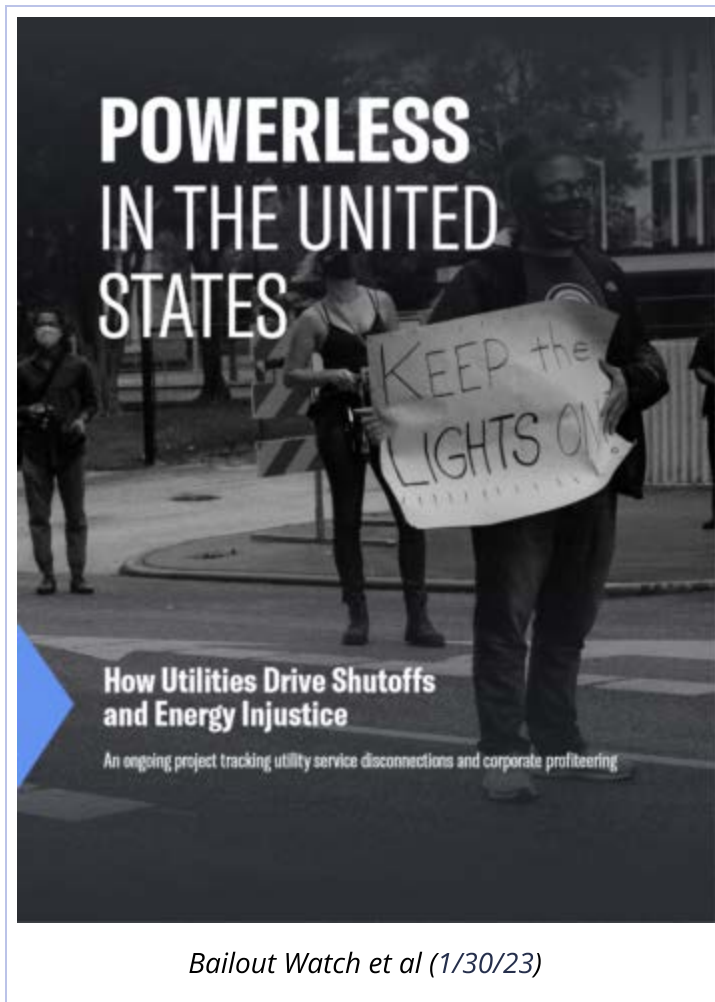
Shelby Green: Thank you for inviting us.

JJ: Let's just get into the content of the report. What do you mean by "powerless"? What is the problem that you're describing? I think a lot of folks might think, oh, my lights blink out for a minute. Losing power is much, much more than that. And it's life or death in some cases, yes?

SGB: Yeah, that's well-said. Zoom out a little bit, I just wanted to share, this report is the third in a series that's been tracking this issue, specifically the extent to which profit-driven utilities have been cutting off families' basic human right to electricity and heat millions of times a year, while at the same time shelling out billions to their shareholders and executives.

We started tracking this in the pandemic, but it's a pretty egregious injustice and has continued since. It's still happening today. Most recently, we've seen that houses were cut off of electricity about 5.7 million times since 2020. And that's a low-end number, as about 20 states don't even provide information on household disconnections. And that's about 40% of states that we've found.

And so all of the numbers and figures we're going to share today are just a small scope of the issue. They don't represent the full scope, and that's also going to be something we talk about a little bit more: data transparency.



And at the heart of our report, it's basically a desire to expose the utility industry's greedy profiteering that's ultimately driving the shutoffs crisis and energy insecurity.

JJ: I wanted to just, actually, you very forward, in the report, connect electric and gas service shutoffs and profiteering, and I think there's a reason that you connect those two things.

SG: Yeah, I think most consumers really don't realize what is happening when it comes to their utility bill, or the energy system that we have designed in America.

Most utilities, they're able to get a rate of return from their customers, and they're not really concerned about providing power, or ensuring that everyone has access to power. They're more concerned about making sure they're making enough money to give to their shareholders.

And so what we really wanted to highlight within this report is that not only are disconnections happening across the country, especially during a time where people are experiencing such high economic uncertainty, but they are also happening because of rising prices of gas, and utilities are heavily reliant on gas, and are building infrastructure and gas-fired power plants that will cause utility bills to increase further, and also cause customers to have to pay for these rate increases.

And so we really wanted to make the connection between consumers, the price of the utility bill, and also this model that is in need of reform in America.

JJ: Absolutely. And I think that's not a connection that mainstream news media are making. In other words, we're hearing prices are rising, and that's hurting you, but we're not necessarily connecting that to profit-making by utility corporations.

And so I appreciate the connection that you're making there, but I just wonder if you could spell out—we're not talking about a few more pennies at the pump. We're talking about, in many cases, this is about whether people can do what they need to do to survive.

SGB: I think framing it that way is really important. People seem to take for granted how important electricity is for physical safety; for food security, keeping your food refrigerated; for medical care, if you have medicine that needs to be refrigerated; and also for telecommunications.

And the nexus with disconnects and arrears is, when people are forced to bear those costs and have their service severed, it makes it also harder for them to maintain employment. It makes it harder for them to keep their kids in school. It can make it more difficult to get a loan or a mortgage. And so we really wanted to highlight how this energy and security issue just

has tendrils into other ways that social instability can manifest, and how the utility industry is really complicit in that.

And, of course, the impacts of this are most disproportionately felt in households of color. We found that last year, one in five American households struggled to pay for an energy bill, but that rate was 50% higher for households of color, and a big reason has to do with some of the lingering impacts of redlining, and basically a lot of households of color might live in structurally deficient housing that ends up costing more to keep warm or cool, which is especially costly and dangerous in the wake of climate disasters like heat waves, freezes, etc.



Selah Goodson Bell: "Last year, one in five American households struggled to pay for an energy bill, but that rate was 50% higher for households of color."

They're already hit the hardest, and are less likely to get the resources they need as early as they need. But then when it comes to the increases in energy demand that come with coping from those extreme weather disasters, we're seeing households of color also get the short end of the stick. So that's something that we also wanted to highlight, and really show the utility industry's role in that factor.

And again, like Shelby said, since they're continuing to invest in fossil gas infrastructure, but are completely disconnected from the implications of that, that itself is also exacerbating the climate emergency.

SG: And just to bring it back to profit for a minute, disconnections across the country, as we outlined in the report, occurred over 1.5 million times in just the first 10 months of 2022.

If just 12 utilities took 1% of their dividends that they paid out to shareholders, that could have covered the cost, that could have prevented disconnections. But now they're also passing on the cost of rising fuel to their customers through rate increases for fuel rider adjustments.

So utility executives, they are not doing their part in making sure that they're keeping the cost low for consumers. They're not doing their part in making sure that consumers that fall behind can get access to relief dollars. And they're also not doing their part in communicating properly why consumers' utility bills are going up.

So there's a really big problem here with utilities. They're not really providing the public with an affordable or reliable service. And regulators, public service commissions, are not doing a good enough job requiring utilities to do that.

So there really is this broken system where the consumer gets hurt every single time. And so we really wanted to highlight in this report that you're not alone when you say that you can't afford your utility bill, or when you say that you have to use your credit card to pay for an essential service.

There are millions of people across the country who are having that same plight, and we need to start looking at utilities and their regulators, and how they are able to uphold this system that hurts the everyday American.

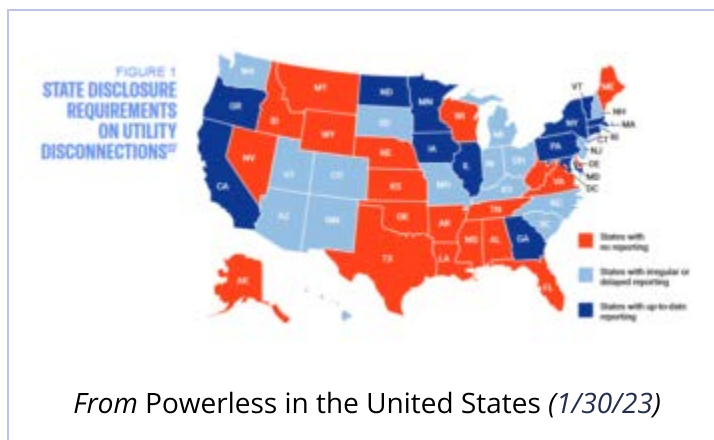
JJ: We hear that the role of journalism is to break stuff down for us. We can't be in those boardrooms, we can't be in those corporate decision-making rooms. And so we rely on journalists to break it down and explain to us as a consumer, or as a worker, what that means to us.

And so what's so great about this report is it does break it down. You and I know folks will read the media. They'll understand that prices are higher for them. They'll understand that energy prices are higher for them. But they're going to be told that it has to do with, you know, Russia or Covid or mysterious winds from the West, when actually there are systems that we can talk about, and that we have levers to control.

SG: Yeah. And there's a lack of accountability and transparency. And Selah can talk about this more, but while we were collecting this data, I mean, I live in Florida, and Florida utilities were only required to report disconnections during a very brief period during the pandemic, and then they stopped reporting this data in October of 2021.



Shelby Green: "If just 12 utilities took 1% of their dividends that they paid out to shareholders, that could have covered the cost, that could have prevented disconnections."



But we also know that Florida Power & Light, one of the biggest utilities in the state, they performed almost a million shutoffs during that reporting period, and now we have no idea how many people they're cutting off again.

So what's frustrating is that there are people who think that they're just alone in this process of not being able to afford their utility bills. And there's also a factor of shame associated with that, not being able to afford your most basic bill, not being able to keep the power on in your house, not being able to cook food, because you have no electricity.

There's a lot of shame associated with not being able to do the bare minimum, and people think that it's their fault, but they're not the only ones to bear this blame. There are utilities and regulators and state legislators who also should be bearing this responsibility, and thinking about: what can we put in place to make sure consumers are being protected?

So in states like Virginia, there's a bill that's going through the general assembly that is trying to pause disconnections during a state of emergency. Also, in North Carolina, there is a moratorium in place during winter, so when the weather reaches a certain point, you won't be disconnected because of the temperature.

Those are protections that should be given to every American across this country. It should not be utility-specific or state-specific. It should be a protection that everyone can receive, because everyone does deserve that right to know, even when you are struggling, you do have protection still.

JJ: Selah, can you add to that? And also I love that you would name the names, you have a hall of shame. There are folks who are doing better and worse on this, in terms of just acknowledging what Shelby has just talked about. It's a reality for many people, and they shouldn't be punished by having their freaking lights turned off.

So, immediate action, thoughts?

SGB: Yeah, definitely can add to that. And also in the spirit of naming, I can list a couple of who those hall of shame utility companies were. Some of the top three this year were Exelon, Southern Co. and DTE Energy. And NextEra and Duke last year were two of our worst. But as Shelby mentioned, in Florida, since they no longer require utilities to report on household disconnections, we didn't have any access to that data.

If NextEra were to continue the disconnection rate it had last year, they would've definitely topped our list this year. But even without that, they still made the top 12, when we look back from 2020 through October of last year. These dozen companies were responsible for 86% of the power shutoffs we saw.

So it's a small number of companies that are just causing a massive amount of harm. Again, like Shelby said, it would've only taken 1% of the amount spent on shareholder dividends to prevent those disconnections. And so it's truly inexcusable, and is a result of their corporate greed.



Exelon®

In terms of immediate actions, another state we want to lift up as an example of their regulators and their legislators actually putting money behind this issue is New York. They actually recently forgave the utility debt of almost 480,000 customers through May of last year, recognizing the different crises that were present, that of the climate crisis, in terms of Covid, and this is like a one-time payment, and they also did the same for low-income customers last summer.

But what we're asking for is a broader forgiveness of utility debt that Congress can hopefully institute by taxing utility profits. As we just saw, it won't even take that much to stop utility shutoffs, but when it comes to arrearages, it's a much bigger issue. And that continues to mount.

Again, like Shelby was outlining, it doesn't take a disconnection for someone to suffer from the punitive financial measures that these utilities are imposing. And so some other solutions we're proposing, again, is some disconnection data transparency. In that light, we're hoping that the Energy Information Administration or state utility commissions are able to mandate these utilities to start tracking and disclosing power and gas shutoff data on a monthly basis, and also include zip code and demographic data, so we know who is being impacted and where.

And we're also hoping to just institute a shutoff ban. As Shelby said, it shouldn't be limited to specific times of the year, specific temperatures, or specific states or utilities. Everyone has a right to access electricity and heat.

I already mentioned utility debt forgiveness, but I'm also hoping that Congress boosts funding for LIHEAP and WAP, the Weatherization Assistance Program.



LIHEAP

And finally, we're really trying to start a narrative around the need to really get off of this obsession with fossil fuels. We see how volatile fossil fuel prices are, but we also see how, again, they are what drives the climate emergency, and we're hoping that the Biden administration uses its executive powers to halt new fossil fuel production and infrastructure.

There are a couple others we could go through, but I know I've been talking for a minute, so I don't know, Shelby, if you wanted to add anything in that light.

SG: I thought that was a great listing.

JJ: Yeah. Let me just ask you both, in terms of journalists, because it seems like you're in another world, in some ways, than the way that corporate media discuss things.

This kind of conversation is largely off the page, and so I would like to ask you both— obviously folks who are media consumers are also the same folks who might have their lights shut off, you know? But then they pick up the paper, and the paper tells them what the problem is and what the solution is.

And I would like to ask you both: What would you have journalists do? Who would you have them talk to? What questions would you have them ask that could turn this conversation around? And how do we reorient folks to the conversation that might change things?

SG: I think where journalists can start is just going up to people in parking lots, or people at the park, asking them, have you looked at your utility bill lately? Have you noticed any changes in your utility bill?

When I first started learning about shutoffs and utility bills, that's what I did. I had a petition. I went to the park. I was asking people if they've noticed a difference in their utility bill, if they've accrued any debt during the pandemic. And I was asking them to sign a petition to make sure my city extended a moratorium, so people didn't lose power.

So where journalists can start is just start talking to everyday people, and get them to look at things that they've stopped looking at, potentially. Not a lot of people look at the fees or charges that are hidden within their utility bill.

And so, yeah, I would just encourage journalists to get everyday residents to start thinking about energy, looking at their utility bill, even scheduling tours with their local utility, and understanding, where does the fuel come from, and what are the factors that are set in place that impact my utility bill?

But there's not enough everyday people who are thinking about energy, and I don't blame them. It's a very difficult topic. Most people just turn on the switch, and that's the most thinking they do about it. And then when you try to start looking at things, it's a little bit complicated, because you don't have access to utility executives, and you don't understand what decisions they're making that influence your bill at the end of the day.

So journalists really are the middlemen between the everyday people and the people in power, and the people that sit on those boardrooms for utilities. Those are the spaces where journalists need to be, and they need to disseminate this information in a more direct way to everyday consumers, so they really understand what's impacting my utility bill, and what can I do to make sure that it's not increasing.

Like right now across the country, there are utilities who are requesting rate increases from their public service commissioners. That information needs to be disseminated to everyday people, and people need to feel like they have a voice in the process.

They should use this voice. They should file testimony in these rate cases, and they should be more engaged. If we're not engaged with society, then utilities will continue to do whatever they want, and that will impact us in a negative way.

JJ: Selah Goodson Bell, final thoughts?

SGB: Yeah, that was well said. I don't have much to add; I just want to echo that last point that Shelby was talking about, of basically opening up the Pandora's box of what the public service commission is doing and the hearings that they have. These are public hearings that folks don't have access to, or, like Shelby was saying, they might be talking about topics that feel out of touch, that feel wonky, but know they are topics that affect people on a daily basis.

And I think journalists can do a better job of trying to break those topics down, and know that those are spaces where folks need to be. And so trying to uplift folks in those spaces, but then also translating a lot of the admittedly wonky topics that we're talking about in a way that everyday people can understand, and feel pressured to get engaged on, so that they can actually hold these utilities accountable and, again, hold their regulators accountable.

JJ: I'd like to thank you both very much. We've been speaking with Shelby Green, research fellow at the Energy and Policy Institute, and Selah Goodson Bell, energy justice campaigner at the Center for Biological Diversity. Thank you both so very much for joining us this week on **CounterSpin**.

SG: Yeah. Thank you for having us.

SGB: Thank you.

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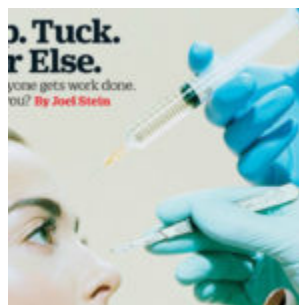


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Filed under: Corporate Power, Energy, Inequality

Janine Jackson

Janine Jackson is FAIR's program director and producer/host of FAIR's syndicated weekly radio show CounterSpin. She contributes frequently to FAIR's newsletter Extra!, and co-edited The FAIR Reader: An Extra! Review of Press and Politics in the '90s (Westview Press). She has appeared on ABC's Nightline and CNN Headline News, among other outlets, and has testified to the Senate Communications Subcommittee on budget reauthorization for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

Her articles have appeared in various publications, including In These Times and the UAW's Solidarity, and in books including Civil Rights Since 1787 (New York University Press) and Stop the Next War Now: Effective Responses to Violence and Terrorism (New World Library).

Jackson is a graduate of Sarah Lawrence College and has an M.A. in sociology from the New School for Social Research.



Hiep Nguyen

From: Beatrice Balboa <beatricebalboa@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, February 18, 2023 2:28 PM
To: Ellen Plendl
Subject: Florida Power and Light shame on you?!
Attachments: Letters to the editor for Saturday, February 18, 2023.pdf

Saturday 18 February 2023 1430 hours

Ellen Plendl
Regulatory Consultant
Florida Public Service Commission
Office of Consumer Assistance & Outreach
1-800-342-3552 (phone)
1-800-511-0809 (fax)

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to express my ongoing deepest disappointment that the electrical utility industrial sector continues to mismanage the electrical infrastructure throughout the State of Florida despite given unfettered access to elected and appointed government officials and agencies in the furtherance of policies and agendas, which consist of pursuing poorly thought out sourcing of energy resources and a decidedly anti-consumer stance with the rate-paying public across the board. Ongoing investigations continue undercover the long-standing practices by these captains of industry to extract ever larger fees and electrical rates to aggrandize their oversized ambitions by direct and indirect political arrangements in backrooms.

The attached documentation clearly indicates the ongoing conditions of the electrical infrastructure in the State of Florida as well as the lengths to which these captains of industry try to influence governmental policy makers.

Please place these observations and articles in the appropriate docket to underscore the overwhelmingly calculated cold-hearted manner that these captains seem to influence the very elected/appointed representatives that should, instead, be seeking to comfort their constituents day-to-day hardships to pay for the aggrandizement of these out sized economic sectors.

Thank you for your time in these matters and hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,
Beatrice Balboa
1010 South Ocean Boulevard, Unit 1008
Pompano Beach, FL 33062-6631
USA

Letters to the editor for Saturday, February 18, 2023

Our readers share their opinions on a variety of topics

Letter writers Gannett

Bill arrives but still no power

Our community of 320 homes was devastated by Hurricane Ian in September. To this day, we are still without power and water. We paid our FPL monthly bill in October for September's usage. October no power no bill. November no power no bill, December no power no bill. January no power no bill. February 16, still no power and a bill arrives! We are being charged for having an account the last few months! Losing our homes and possessions wasn't enough? Now you have added insult to injury. Yes, I could and should have canceled the account, but without notification from FPL telling us power would not be restored, and following up every month to verify we were not being billed, it came as a shocking insult to receive this lump sum bill February 16, 2023. Florida Power and Light shame on you. *Kimberly Kania, Century 21 Manufactured Home Community, Fort Myers*

Hiep Nguyen

From: Beatrice Balboa <beatricebalboa@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, February 17, 2023 6:57 PM
To: Ellen Plendl
Subject: Florida Power and Light poor behavior continues?!
Attachments: Streetlights finally back on in St. Johns Sounty neighborhood _ firstcoastnews.com.pdf;
Storm risk is only one of many reasons why homeowners insurance can be cancelled _
Real Estate _ islandernews.com.pdf; US Grid Is A Magnet For Terrorists_ How Can We
Solve This_.pdf

Friday 17 February 2023 1900 hours

Ellen Plendl
Regulatory Consultant
Florida Public Service Commission
Office of Consumer Assistance & Outreach
1-800-342-3552 (phone)
1-800-511-0809 (fax)

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Sincerely,
Beatrice Balboa
1010 South Ocean Boulevard, Unit 1008
Pompano Beach, FL 33062-6631
USA

Street lights back on in St. Johns County neighborhood after contacting 'Ask Anthony' team

Theresa Foley contacted First Coast News Anchor Anthony Austin for help after getting empty promises from Florida Power and Light.

Author: **Anthony Austin**
Published: **8:32 PM EST February 16, 2023**
Updated: **10:51 PM EST February 16, 2023**



ST. JOHNS COUNTY, Fla. — A St. Johns County woman says she was tired of being left in the dark.

Theresa Foley says the street light at the entrance to her Glen St. Johns community had been out since October. Another light across the street from her house was flickering on and off.

After noticing no one was taking care of the problem, she made some phone calls in November.

"I contacted our HOA and the management company, and they said it's either going to be the county or Florida Power and Light. I contacted the county, and they said it was FPL," Foley said.

Credit: First Coast News

Foley contacted Florida Power and Light on Nov. 22, and she says, they told her it would take up to 20 days for them to work on getting the lights repaired.

"Time went by, and I said... you know what...no one ever came. Let me give a call back. So, I called, and they said oh we've been really busy. It hasn't been assigned to anyone."

After two weeks, Foley was still left in the dark.

"I call again. No, it hasn't been assigned to anybody. We'll escalate it," Foley added about her phone conversation with FPL.

No one ever called Theresa back, so she emailed the "Ask Anthony" team in February.

Anthony contacted FPL about the problem. The next day the street lights were fixed.

* **Solar panels:** A recent [story](#) by First Coast News in northern Florida reported that some insurance companies are parting ways with Florida residents who want to put solar panels on their home, and some are just dropping existing solar customers.

According to that report, one St. Augustine insurance agent suggested it might be happening because of a clause in some Florida Power and Light contracts that says any damage caused by the panels, "you as a homeowner are responsible to pay for all of that damage."

One example is if a surge running through the panels causes damage to the grid or other homes.

In addition, the report said that home insurance companies are also denying coverage if the homeowner chooses to sell the extra power their panels generate back to the electric company. The system is called net metering, and it's a common practice for a homeowner with solar panels.



House roof with solar panels.

manfredxy

US Grid Is A Magnet For Terrorists: How Can We Solve This?

Ariel Cohen Contributor 

I cover energy, security, Europe, Russia/Eurasia & the Middle East

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Feb 17, 2023, 10:00am EST

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This stock image shows multiple power lines on overhead towers. GETTY IMAGES

Many people take the security of our national grid for granted. They should not.

Since the days of the Soviet threat during the Cold War, the US grid was in the scope of foreign militaries. In addition to China and Russia, Iran and North Korea drew

contingency plans to destroy our sources of electricity. Yet, it is not only foreign governments that target our electric lifelines.

Recently an avowed Neo-Nazi and *Atomwaffen* founder [Brandon Russel](#) was charged after an attack on electrical substations near Baltimore in an attempt to destroy the city's power grid and further their racist mission. Their hope? A blackout would start a "race war". Repugnant, deluded, or otherwise, he is not the first one to identify civilian energy infrastructure as an easy target to attack for advancing political or financial aims. Energy infrastructure is ubiquitous and vulnerable, and its disruption offers immediate and tangible results to the perpetrators. This vulnerability means we should expect more similar attacks.



A gunfire attack on two electrical substations in Moore County, N.C., knocked out power to the ... [+] [KARL B DEBLAKER/AP](#)

Brandon Russel's case is not isolated. Other prominent incidents include the gunfire attack in [North Carolina](#) on electrical substations which left thousands of households and businesses without power for several days last December. Investigators found

gates were broken and evidence of gunfire damage to equipment at two substations in the county.

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The US government already issued emergency legislation in May 2021 after [Colonial Pipeline](#) was hit by a ransomware cyber-attack. The FBI officially confirmed that the ransomware attack was caused by a cyber-criminal gang called [DarkSide](#) (believed to be based in Russia and its former Soviet states), who infiltrated Colonial's network and locked the data on some computers and servers. The pipeline carries 45% of the East Coast's supply of diesel, petrol, and jet fuel. Domestic prices for regular unleaded gasoline immediately rose six cents per gallon during that week to \$2.967 per gallon.

The grid will be more important as [EVs proliferate](#). If the grid is brought down, mobility would disrupt, halting commutes and delivery of goods and services. We cannot afford enemies, foreign or domestic, to bring us to our knees by bringing our grid down.



CENTRAL UKRAINE - NOVEMBER 10: A high voltage substation switchyard stands partially destroyed ...

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Geopolitical and not just subversive or economic motives also often motivate attacks on energy infrastructure. One need only look at the intentional multibillion-dollar damage done by Russian military attacks on Ukraine's power stations, transformers, and grid. In a tragically common story, last week Russia unleashed a new wave of [missile strikes](#) on energy infrastructure across Ukraine, causing power outages and restricting water supplies. Missiles hit the critical city of Zaporizhzhia, where Europe's largest nuclear power plant is located, increasing the risk of a catastrophic accident that could compromise the nuclear plant's safety systems.

The simultaneous vulnerability and centrality of energy infrastructure make it too tempting a target for state or non-state actors not to target. The stresses of changing geopolitical, meteorological, and cyber events in conjunction with frequently delayed maintenance make these networks even weaker.

Green energy's rise and reliance on large-volume energy storage and transfers will only amplify these vulnerabilities as time goes on. Disregarding all other logistical, financial, or technological constraints, consider the chokepoints for power lines for a series of conventional energy plants versus a massive solar panel farm in the Nevada desert. By virtue of this hypothetical project's location and delivery requirements, it would have only a few chokepoints distributing huge loads of energy over long distances vulnerable to sabotage.

While companies such as Brookfield Renewable (BEP) and Xcel Energy (XEL) join established companies such as Tesla or General Electric in addressing grid vulnerabilities, the investment will remain a trickle until either prospective profit increase or government support arrives. In the former case, it will likely be only at a point of a dire crisis, as companies do little preventative work.

A closer look at the US national [grid](#) reveals that it is currently made up of many geographically diffused power generators (nuclear reactors, dams, coal and gas thermal plants, solar parks, wind turbines, etc...) with more than [five million miles](#) of power lines carrying electricity all over the U.S. The grid's increasing interconnectivity combined with generation centralization is increasing vulnerability while decreasing grid redundancy and resiliency. This invites sabotage.



People pass a water treatment plant and electrical power lines on a bike path in Arlington, ... [+] AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

The US grid continues to deteriorate and grid failures are becoming [more and more common](#). Green energy transformation is an argument for increasing grid resiliency and redundancy. The grid failures in neglected regions, like California, are widely known and [reported](#). US [municipalities](#) and utilities such as AEP Texas Central Company, Central Maine Power, and Florida Power and Light Co. need to [ramp up](#) their energy grid maintenance. This needs to be augmented with the wholesale

integration of high-volume batteries (when technology makes them economical) and an increase in the number of high-volume cross-regional transfer lines.

The regionalized grid system in the US will likely have to become interconnected to accommodate increased volumes of green energy, further underscoring the necessity of these grid-wide changes. Currently, the US is lacking in every department. Even if we find a carbon-free panacea for all energy generation tomorrow, we would be unable to use it due to the early 20th-century grid's deficiencies.

Long-term moves towards resiliency may do little to stop immediate Brandon Russells imitators, but it will help stop the next generation of would-be domestic terrorists. A recent Department of Homeland Security intelligence briefing [suggests](#) that "*domestic violent extremists will likely continue to plot and encourage physical attacks against electrical infrastructure in the United States*". There are two ways to combat this. The first would be the impractical physical securitization of every piece of energy infrastructure in the United States, covering millions of miles and hundreds of thousands of pieces of equipment.

The second is to build up cyber security, grid resiliency, and grid redundancy through responsible private/public partnership, investment, and public works. And while we are at it, we need to [harden the grid](#) against Electro-Magnetic Pulses (EMP) – the massive surge of magnetic energy that often disrupts electric infrastructure and electronics when released through nuclear blasts and possibly other manmade means.

Existing investment through the Department of Energy's TRAC program is a [good start](#), but nowhere near enough. Investing in the next generation of power lines and energy transformers is just as important as solar panels or electric vehicles. Aiding the green energy transformation, deterring domestic terrorism, and protection

against EMP intersect so neatly upon one policy solution: investing in a 21st century safe and secure US power grid.

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Cowritten by Wesley Alexander Hill. With acknowledgments to Martina Besana.



Ariel Cohen

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