

February 9, 2024

The Honorable JB Pritzker  
Governor of Illinois  
Office of the Governor  
401 S. Spring Street  
Springfield, IL 62704

Dear Governor Pritzker:

The signatories on this letter represent thousands of Illinois workers and businesses who are on the front lines of a monumental effort to modernize the state's electric infrastructure and prepare it for the transition to clean energy. Today we write to convey the critical need for the state of Illinois to approve a revised electric grid plan as soon as possible, allowing this much-needed work to continue.

We were stunned when the Illinois Commerce Commission voted to reject the Ameren grid plan in December. This shortsighted decision will not only slow the state's transition to renewable energy, but it has also put thousands of skilled workers out of a job. Cuts to vital infrastructure projects have resulted in the loss of nearly 650 direct jobs on Ameren property. This will have an economic impact in communities throughout Downstate Illinois. Even more concerning, laid off electric workers are leaving Illinois to go work in states with more constructive energy policies. If we have a powerful storm like the Derecho of late June, there is little doubt that power restoration will take significantly longer than it needs to simply because the workers we need will no longer be here.

If corrective action is not taken soon, many of the diverse programs created by the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA) will hit a dead end. There will be no jobs available for program participants. Small specialty contractors and suppliers will be hit especially hard.

It is with great frustration that we listen to those praising the ICC for rejecting utility grid plans in the name of protecting energy consumers from spikes in their energy bills. Those of us who make a living stringing wire, erecting towers and poles, splicing cables, installing outage-detecting automation, and building substations know that when you stop making investments in the electric infrastructure, you put reliability at significant risk. Here's the reality: Downstate Illinois is a net importer of electricity. We simply do not produce enough to meet demand. As baseload fossil fuel generating facilities continue to close, we need a grid capable of facilitating the two-way flow of power as more renewables come online. Without fortification and the ability to bring in more clean energy sources, the grid will not be equipped to handle these new intermittent sources of electricity. When demand exceeds supply, it drives up costs, much like it did two years ago when supply prices spiked more than 100% for customers in the Ameren service territory.

Ameren submitted a plan to maintain and improve our electric delivery system and meet the requirements of the state's clean energy law. They participated in the process for the last two years, meeting with all stakeholders trying to craft a grid plan that would be acceptable to all. Upon completion, with no party calling for the outright rejection, the ICC, without warning, did just that. That decision brings us to the difficult position we now find ourselves in, one in which there appears to be no sense of urgency to fix.

We need a grid plan approved, putting our union members back to work. A plan to deliver energy efficiency for our public schools and facilitate the transition to electric vehicles. A plan to empower energy consumers to control their energy usage and lower their costs. A plan to make it easier for citizens and developers to connect to distributed energy resources such as solar, wind, and battery storage. A plan to drive economic development and strengthen Downstate communities. For reasons we cannot understand, and contrary to the input of its own expert staff, the ICC simply dismissed this plan and union workers are paying the price.

We understand that decisions on rate adjustments are not easy. We also know that addressing the effects of climate change cannot wait. Approval of the Ameren grid plan cannot wait. We respectfully ask your support in ensuring that Ameren's grid plan is considered and approved by any means necessary. Delaying construction and eliminating investment in the electric grid for any extended period is simply unacceptable.

Respectfully,