

- Bexley News
- Big Walnut News
- Delaware News
- Dublin News
- Gahanna News
- German Village Gazi
- Grove City News
- Hilliard Northwest N
- New Albany News

Visit [zip2save.com](http://zip2save.com) for all your favorite circulars & coupons!

[Circulars](#)

[Coupons](#)

[Deals](#)

[zip2save](#)

**FIND A DOCTOR**

**SHOP LOCAL**  
view all ads



**GROCERY COUPONS**  
CLICK HERE

**YELLOW PAGES**

Your News



Share photos with the community



Submit events to share with the community.



Tell Us! Submit your news, announcements or letters.

Your Photos



Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

[Today's Events](#) [Submit Event](#)

## PUCO report sides with Fight the Hike on rate increase

*\* Utilities Commission staff report says Ohio American Water's proposed water-sewer rate hikes are 'unsustainable.'*

By BRET LIEBENDORFER

Published: Wednesday, December 2, 2009 11:26 AM EST

[Text Size](#) [rTf](#)

Opponents of Ohio American Water apparently have a new ally in their fight against water rate increases.

The Public Utilities Commission of Ohio released a report Monday, Nov. 30 that recommends rate increases next year be cut from as high as 26 percent to between 4.3 and 7.3 percent, and to 3.6 to 5.3 percent for wastewater.

"Staff concludes that the business model currently utilized at Ohio American Water Company must be updated or altered," stated PUCO's report. "Cost growth trends that exceed the inflation rate and the customers' ability to pay relative to the rate of household income growth, are unsustainable in the longer term."

Another recommendation by the PUCO staff report was the removal of a step increase for three additional years that would raise the proposed increase to 60 percent.

The PUCO report stated that Ohio American Water argues for step increases in part by reporting they would save customers \$2.1 million, because the company would not have to file separate rate increase applications, and that customers would be better prepared for future increases.

"We believe the PUCO is so aggressive against OAW now because of the facts we brought to them," said Fight the Hike co-chairman James Welch. "They're finally listening to us because we're an organized group of upset people."

In a released statement, Welch said, "The report confirms what ratepayers have been telling the PUCO for years -- that if excessive water rate hikes don't end now, the typical Ohio American Water bill will eventually be higher than an entire household paycheck. Our water bills are already more than our gas and electric combined."

With the more moderate increases, the PUCO staff report stated Ohio American Water should work on cost control measures and shareholders, not customers, should pay for annual incentive awards during the recession.

Other issues the PUCO report found with the Ohio American Water proposed increase included an overstated rate case expense and "vintage" plant additions that should have been included in prior cases.

Formal opposition against the rate increases began over the summer with the forming of Fight the Hike Ohio for customers who live in Blendon, Madison, Norwich, Perry, Prairie, Sharon and Truro townships. Doing public relations work for the citizens group is Waterhouse Public Relations, a company from Tennessee.

Central to the complaints are a series of rate increases since 2005 that Fight the Hike Ohio said increased bills by 325 percent to Ohio American Water customers.

Even without the planned increases for 2010 through 2013, the group said, Ohio American Water customers are paying double the water costs of their neighbors.

Ohio American Water has said the increases are needed to upgrade poor infrastructure, and its customer base -- spread across seven townships in noncontiguous areas of the county -- are more expensive to service than residents in Columbus.

Mary Beth Johnson, manager of external affairs, said the company is reviewing the report and plans to file a rebuttal by the end of December, before a 30-day deadline to respond.

Public hearings on the proposed rate increase are expected to be held in January with PUCO members voting on the proposal soon after.

[Previous Article](#)

[Mystery puts Reynoldsburg students in learning mode](#)

[Next Article](#)

[Another Grandview fire victim reopens in new spot](#)

Article Rating

Current Rating: 0 of 0 votes

Rate File:  Select Rating:

Video Comments



**Advanced, Aesthetic & Laser Surgery**



Before you get carried away.....



Sign up for a Free copy of Columbus Bride

