

Energy Committee Hearing
Bill HR4220
March 7, 2017

Submitted by:
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Hello and thank you for the opportunity to speak before the committee today. I am here to support Rep. Glenn's bill HR 4220.

I'd like to address the issue of cost recovery as it pertains to DTE's opt-out fees. First, in MPSC case U-17053 DTE testified under oath there is no distinction between an AMI smart meter with its transmitter disabled and an analog meter. And under oath they also acknowledged there is no mandate in Michigan law that requires the AMI meter to be installed (Sitkauskus 3 T 416).

In DTE's punitive opt-out plan customers have to pay an extra charge and yet are saddled with the very meter they are trying to avoid. A smart meter still has electronic characteristics that are disruptive to electro-magnetic sensitive individuals even with the transmitter off.

Allowing a customer to retain their current analog meter actually saves the expense of the new meter as well as the labor cost to install it. Allowing homeowners to report their own meter readings – like we did years ago – perhaps based on credit worthiness and occasional audit, saves the cost of the meter reader.

DTE is quick to pass incurred expenses along to a special class of customers but when there's opportunity to have those same customers save DTE money by not requiring the cost of a new meter, DTE defers. Apparently DTE picks and chooses when to absorb various business expenses.

Also note that U-17053 established a projected customer opt-out rate of a meager two-tenths-of-one-percent (0.2%).

Many businesses in a competitive environment absorb such minor expenses as a cost of doing business - especially companies that place a high value on customer satisfaction. But DTE does not operate in a competitive environment and does not fear losing customers.

And where is the concern for DTE's added expense resulting from additional cyber security staff necessary to protect these computerized smart meters? Why should opt-outers share that cost burden? And what of the replacement cost for the considerably shorter lifespan of an AMI smart meter?

In a case contesting the MPSC's past opt-out decision, Judge Peter O'Connell of the Michigan Court of Appeals stated (Docket No. 317434; 317456, LC No. 00-017087)

"...the opt-outers...receive no benefit from the AMI smart meter program and must actually pay to be excluded from it, but then the opt-outer must also share in the costs of the program because of the increase to the base rate. ...I cannot discern the reason to penalize those individuals that choose not to be associated with the AMI program."

So in conclusion, we turn to our legislators to provide the relief in this matter that has only been met with indifference at the MPSC. We simply want to exercise our freedom of choice regarding the technology that is placed on our property.

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