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**NEWS
RELEASE**

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City Council Takes Action to Better Protect El Paso Ratepayers

EL PASO, Texas—The El Paso City Council has approved a measure that allows the City Attorney's Office to respond more quickly when electric and natural gas companies seek approval for projects, rate increases, or other changes that could affect customer utility bills.

The action is designed to help protect residents and businesses from unnecessary utility costs by ensuring the City can participate early in decisions that affect what customers pay.

When utility companies ask regulators to approve rate increases, recover the costs of major infrastructure projects, or build new facilities, those decisions can directly affect what El Paso residents and businesses pay for electric and natural gas service. This action helps ensure the City can review those requests, challenge unreasonable costs, and advocate for customers before decisions are finalized.

Because many utility decisions are made under strict deadlines, the City must be able to act quickly to fully review proposals and advocate for El Paso customers before those decisions are finalized.

"Every dollar added to a utility bill matters for families and businesses. As utility filings become more frequent and increasingly complex, the City must be prepared to respond quickly and effectively," Mayor Renard U. Johnson said. "This action strengthens our ability to protect El Paso ratepayers, challenge unreasonable costs, and ensure our community has a strong voice before decisions affecting utility bills are made."

Protecting Customers from Unnecessary Costs

The City's advocacy has already helped protect El Paso ratepayers from tens of millions of dollars in proposed utility cost increases. In recent cases, the City's participation helped secure a reduction of approximately \$50 million from an approximately \$85 million requested electric rate increase, helped avoid an estimated \$15 million to \$20 million in additional customer costs, and contributed to a \$20 million reduction in a proposed electric system resiliency investment. The City has also helped secure additional customer protections, including capital cost caps and minimum production guarantees for major infrastructure projects, while improving utility accountability throughout the regulatory process.

Why Faster Action Matters

Texas law gives cities an important role in reviewing many utility requests before they move to state regulators. Over the past several years, the City has participated in more than 40 electric and natural gas regulatory proceedings, and those filings have become increasingly frequent and complex, often with short deadlines for cities to respond.

The authority approved by City Council allows the City Attorney's Office to act quickly so El Paso doesn't miss opportunities to represent local customers. When needed, the City Attorney's Office may initiate intervention in regulatory proceedings to ensure the City's concerns are considered before decisions are made.

"When utilities seek approval for projects or rate changes, they often work under tight deadlines and involve millions of dollars in proposed costs," City Attorney Karla Nieman said. "This action allows the City to move quickly, bring in independent engineering, financial, and regulatory experts when needed, and make sure El Paso customers have a strong voice before decisions that affect their utility bills are made."

The authorization applies to a variety of electric and natural gas matters, including requests for new utility infrastructure, rate increases, interim cost recovery, and other proceedings that could affect El Paso customers.

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