

SIERRA CLUB FILES LEGAL CHALLENGE IN OKLAHOMA SUPREME COURT--CORPORATION COMMISSION IMPROPERLY APPROVED PLAN TO PROP UP OLD COAL PLANT

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Oklahoma City, OK - Sierra Club filed an appeal today with the Oklahoma Supreme Court, asking it to overturn a decision by the Oklahoma Corporation Commission (OCC) that may leave ratepayers subsidizing a half-billion-dollar project to salvage an idled coal power plant. Oklahoma Gas & Electric (OG&E) received approval from the Commission to install pollution scrubbers to extend the operating life of the struggling Sooner coal plant near Red Rock. If the decision stands, families, small businesses, and churches in much of Oklahoma can expect large rate increases to their monthly electric bills.

The scrubbers will prolong the operation of the 35-year-old Sooner Power Plant, which has been stalled for the past six months as market conditions and updated pollution safeguards have rendered the plant economically inefficient. The independent regional transmission organization, the Southwest Power Pool (SPP), shut down the plant last year and put it on standby reserve.

In the decision that Sierra Club is challenging at the Supreme Court, the Corporation Commission failed to include the consumer protections that were recommended by the Commission's own outside expert, Dr. Craig Roach. Dr. Roach asked the commission to include consumer protections from future rate increases if the Sooner plant fails to operate as the utility is predicting or requires additional upgrade costs to comply with modern standards. Because the Commission disregarded that advice, consumers are at risk for paying all those costs, whereas the utility and its wealthy shareholders will bear none of that cost.

In response to the decision, Johnson Bridgwater, Director of the Oklahoma Sierra Club, issued the following statement:

"OG&E has been relentless in its pursuit to squeeze every cent it can from its ratepayers to subsidize its profits. After twice rejecting the utility, the OCC has now approved OG&E's third request to pursue a risky half-billion dollar project to salvage an obsolete coal plant. Why are we sinking this kind of money into coal plants that need fuel from

Wyoming, when we have abundant clean resources in our very own state? Half a billion dollars passed on to Oklahoma ratepayers is a travesty, as groups like AARP have clearly stated-- especially knowing coal is NOT the most cost-effective option, NOR is it the right option to protect Oklahoma's environment."

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