



For Immediate Release
Contact: Rick Abbruzzese
O: (410) 814-4206
C: (410) 790-5002

Ehrlich's Office Blocks Petitioners

Petition Signers turned away as they attempt to deliver petition to protect Maryland families from Governor's 72% rate hike

Annapolis, MD (March 24, 2006) – Several signers of the O'Malley-Brown petition calling on Governor Ehrlich to act to protect Marylanders from his 72% electric rate hike gathered today in Annapolis to deliver the petition to the Governor. Representing over 4,100 Maryland families, business people, single parents and seniors, the signers attempted to deliver the 370-page petition to Governor Ehrlich this afternoon, but they were turned away at the Governor's Office.

The petition demands relief from Ehrlich's Public Service Commission's failed leadership and shocking 72% rate hike that will take affect this summer and calls for the immediate replacement of Kenneth Schisler, the Chairman of Ehrlich's Public Service Commission.

"This petition represents the collective voice of Maryland families and small businesses that no longer have a voice on the Public Service Commission," said Jonathan Epstein, O'Malley's Campaign Manager. "The fact that Governor Ehrlich's office would not accept this petition is one more example of his administration turning its back on Maryland's hard working families, and siding with special interests."

The petition signers told personal stories about the massive 72% rate hike and how it will have a devastating effect on their family budgets and businesses. One petition signer and small business owner who attended today's event stated on his petition, "Please do all [four of the items on the petition]! As a small businessperson, I cannot afford these hikes in my rates."

Last week, the O'Malley-Brown campaign launched a sweeping petition drive online and across the Baltimore area demanding relief from Governor Ehrlich's 72% energy rate hikes. The neighborhood petition drive followed the overwhelming response to the online petition, which generated thousands of signatures and requests from the community to take the petition drive to the streets.

Going door-to-door in neighborhoods throughout the BGE service area, campaign volunteers gathered hundreds of signatures placing more pressure on Ehrlich to mitigate the damage of his proposed rate hikes. Volunteers for the petition drive fanned out across Baltimore City, as well

as Baltimore, Howard, Anne Arundel and Harford Counties to raise awareness of the Ehrlich Public Service Commission's announcement that typical Maryland families would see their electric bills jump a shocking 72% this summer costing us \$743 more a year.

The petition calls on Bob Ehrlich to:

- Immediately replace the Chairman of his Public Service Commission
- Put a Shock Absorber into place that helps families and businesses facing the imminent crisis
- Cancel his 5% interest surcharge that gouges families already facing record energy hikes
- Negotiate a better deal for consumers by considering the rate hike and the Constellation-Florida Power & Light merger at the same time

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Friends of Martin O'Malley – 2400 Boston St., Ste. 203 - Baltimore, MD 21221 - 410-814-4206 - fax: 410-814-4218
Authority: Friends of Martin O'Malley, Martin F. Cadogan, Treasurer.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Over 4,100 people signed the O'Malley-Brown petition to protect Maryland families and small businesses from Governor Ehrlich's Public Service Commission 72% rates hikes.

Many of them also provided comments when they signed the petition. Here is a sample of what we heard from Maryland's hardworking families, seniors, young professionals, single parents, and business people.

Not everyone has easy access to funds. I think the commission is insensitive to those of us who are barely making it as single parents raising children alone. You should appoint more representatives who struggle instead of cronies who are well off and clueless.

Audrey Giarrano, Baltimore

Please do all [four of the items on the petition]! As a small businessperson, I cannot afford these hikes in my rates!!!!

David Balderson, Ellicott City

Can you imagine a hard working single mother managing to pay just BGE bills alone? Not only is this making it difficult for me, but also making it quite difficult to move forward no matter

how hard I work. Are incomes being raised to keep up with all these costs? Or how are we supposed to support ourselves and our children?

Felicia Agen-Davis, Arbutus

This is such a hardship for people like me. I'm a single parent with two children in college. It's bad enough that schools keep going up, now utilities.

Carolyn Robey, Bowie

Mr. Governor,

As the Chief Executive of our State it is your duty to look after the interests of the Citizens of Maryland. This outrageous rate hike by the gas company will push many people deeper into poverty. It is cruel and inconsiderate act. Please use your power to stop this madness and blind greed.

Respectfully,
Zeke Ayele, Baltimore

This increase in energy price can not be sustained by my single-mom budget. Please find a way to restore more normal rates. Thank you.

S. Fiore, Joppa

I am a registered Republican, and I feel very ashamed of my Party.

Ernest Lemaster, Baltimore

The increase in BGE bills will cause lots of families to struggle. If they can't pay their BGE then they have no heat for their families, which may lead to not being able to afford their homes. This could lead to an increase in BK and more unemployment disbursements. This is not like Comcast where us residents can choose other electric companies. I am a single mother and it's bad enough that I can hardly afford gas prices, how are people supposed live. It's not like we all get raises.

Jaime Jacob, Baltimore

Doesn't giving people loans to pay their electric bills doesn't sound a bit bizarre to you? WE CANT AFFORD IT!!! How is a loan going to help?

Brenda Blaney, Manchester

If there is a 72% rate hike in gas & electric, I will not be able to afford it. My aging parents are on a fixed income and have already had difficulty with the increases this winter. Cushioning the "blow" with a moratorium on payments, while adding a 5% "financing fee" only creates more problems. Please do something!!

Nina Messoirs, Towson

We have a baby on the way due in like a few weeks and there is plenty other people in my area that are expecting as well please don't put this extra burden on us and the rest of the area plus what gives you the right to dictate our needs as a reminder your job is to assist us not for us to beg for your support!

Tabitha Stalcup, Hollywood

I am already living paycheck to paycheck and this hike in the electric bill will make it even harder for me to eat and buy gas, much less be able to have any sort of life outside of work and home. I have a diabetic cat, school loans, and a car payment, not to mention all my other bills.

When did you stop serving the people and start serving the monopoly companies that hurt Maryland's economy?

Elizabeth Yarbrough, Carney

This will not only have tremendous impact on our personal situation. Our data center business will be required to pass on tremendous cost increases to our clients or be forced to lose money.

Mark Powell, Severna Park

Please do not let this increase happen, I am a single parent and would not be able to afford this extra expense. I have a hard enough time making ends meet as it is. I would have to get a second job, and spend less time with my children; in turn I would have to pay a babysitter which the second job would be paying for anyway, so I would still be in scraping to pay my bills.

Toni Fowler, Owings Mills

It is unacceptable that legislatures who have known about the impending BGE rate increase have made no attempt to prepare the citizens of their state for the upcoming financial hardship that they will have to endure. The current situation is no doubt the responsibility of many lawmakers.

However, there appears to have been no foresight or planning on the part of the Ehrlich administration to soften the blow or educate the public concerning the rate increase, even though there have been several years for such measures to have been implemented. No matter who was responsible for approving the rate increase initially, it is the responsibility of the current administration to protect the citizens and see to it that fair and equitable business practices are enacted and enforced. To this end, the Ehrlich administration has failed the citizens of Maryland.

Jason Trageser, Baltimore

I am a woman living in Baltimore with a disabled husband. I'm trying hard to make ends meet, but I already have shut off notices for BGE every month. If this goes through and the price goes up, I don't know what I'll do as I'm already struggling.

Anna Chouinard, Baltimore

I am a single parent and cannot afford these ridiculous hikes in cost of gas and electric. They don't hesitate to send turn off notices but they don't care if people cannot afford to pay these ridiculous prices for something that is necessary to live.

Diann Tyrrell, Catonsville

Please do something about the rate increase. I am a single mom with 2 kids and I don't get any type of assistance from the state. Please assist everyone by lowering the rate increase. Thank you and may God bless you.

Single working mothers with families can barely afford to put food on the table let alone pay their utility bills. Those of you how are more privileged don't think about the effect that the rate increases and tax cuts have on those that are barely making ends meet. We are not asking for anyone to GIVE us anything but just allow us to at least let our ends wave to the other even if they can't actually touch without having to work two to three jobs.

Andrea Hill, Baltimore

I am a single mother trying to support my son. I can not afford to pay \$300.00 a month for gas and electric. I have a good paying job at Johns Hopkins. I don't receive any type of assistance from the government. With this kind of increase, a lot of hard working families are going to be hurting financially.

Rebecca Forrester, Baltimore

I am a working single parent. I cannot afford to pay the increase they are proposing. I will probably end up with no gas & electric. My first bill in November 2005 for a two bedroom apartment was 300.00. The lady at BGE told me that it was due to the increase in the rates. Then I got on Budget Billing and we agreed meaning BGE and myself on 140.00 a month. Then I get a bill in the mail for 445.00 which say now give us a 300.00 deposit because our rates are going up.

Then on top of that your budget billing is going from 140.00 to 247.00 a month. I cannot win. There has got to be a better way. There will be a whole lot of people without gas and electric. People cannot not afford these outrageous increases. Please help us if you can. I think it will mainly affect the working population that lives from paycheck to paycheck. Your help will be greatly appreciated by all the citizens of Maryland.
Thank you

Pamela Toney, Baltimore

If families are not able to pay the increased cost of their utilities bills, how can those same families be expected to pay a 5% surcharge? Why are you forcing families to sign up for credit that they did not ask for? This is not the right thing to do.

Annette McMillan, Baltimore
