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Vistra Accelerates Pivot To Invest In Clean Energy

On September 29, Vistra announced a comprehensive plan to accelerate its transition to clean power generation sources and advance efforts to significantly reduce its carbon footprint. The company launched Vistra Zero, a portfolio of zero-carbon power generation facilities. In addition, the company committed to more ambitious long-term emissions reduction targets, released its first climate report, and announced its intention to retire all of its generation subsidiaries' coal plants in Illinois and Ohio.

"The aggregate impact of these milestone initiatives is clear: Vistra's commitment to our transformation to a low-to-no-carbon future is unequivocal and offers unique opportunities for growth and innovation," said Curt Morgan, president and CEO of Vistra. "As evidenced by the actions we take and investments we make, Vistra is paving its way for a sustainable future – economically and environmentally – and we've been focused on transitioning our generation portfolio for the benefit of the environment, our customers, our communities, our people, and our shareholders."

Morgan continued, "Importantly, Vistra's leadership on these issues will not impact our

State Regulated Utility Moratorium Extended Through Winter 2021 For Eligible Customers

On Sept.21, the Illinois Commerce Commission announced the moratorium on disconnections has voluntarily been extended by several state regulated utilities through the Winter 2021 for eligible low-income residential customers, and those who self-report to utilities that they are experiencing financial or COVID-19 hardship. Previously, several of the utilities had voluntarily agreed to extend the moratorium on shutoffs for residential customers until September 30, 2020.

At the request of the ICC, the following utilities have committed to extending the moratorium on utility disconnections for low-income (Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program qualified) residential customers and those financially impacted by COVID-19 until March 31, 2021: Ameren Illinois, Aqua Illinois, Illinois American Water, Commonwealth Edison, Peoples Gas and

North Shore Gas, and Utility Services of Illinois. MidAmerican will voluntarily extend the moratorium on disconnections for Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program qualified residential customers through March 31, 2021 and is further considering additional options to help their customers during this unprecedented time. Additionally, Nicor Gas and Liberty Utilities have agreed to extend the moratorium on disconnections for all residential customers until March 31, 2021.

"Illinois citizens are facing extraordinary challenges due to the pandemic. Low income families and those impacted by COVID-19 should not have to fear losing basic services like electricity, heat, or fresh water," said Chairman Carrie K. Zalewski. "The voluntary actions by these utilities will provide our most vulnerable citizens with some peace of

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FROM THE STAFF

Vote! Make a plan and cast your ballot. Doesn't matter if it's by mail, early or on Election Day. Just make sure to vote! So much depends on it: for yourself and your family, for their future, for Illinois and for the country. Don't leave your words unspoken. IEF

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Vistra

Core mission to provide consumers with reliable, affordable, and sustainable energy while lowering emissions. Electricity is an essential resource, and the demand for it will continue to grow as climate initiatives are implemented and the economy is further electrified. So, while the way we produce electricity is changing, our essential role in the process and core mission will not. Vistra is well-positioned to not only prove our resiliency during this important transformation to cleaner generation sources, but to lead the way."

Assuming necessary advancements in technology and supportive market constructs and public policy, Vistra also announced its next phase of coal plant closures in Illinois and Ohio. The company expects to retire seven Luminant power plants, of which the company owns a combined capacity of more than 6,800 MW, between 2022 and 2027. By year-end 2022 • Edwards Power Plant, Bartonville, IL (MISO) – 585 MW previously announced By year-end 2025 or sooner should economic or other conditions dictate • Baldwin Power Plant, Baldwin, IL (MISO) – 1,185 MW • Joppa Power Plant, Joppa, IL (MISO) –

1,002 MW (plus 239 MW of gas-fueled combustion turbines). By year-end 2027 or sooner should economic or other conditions dictate • Kincaid Power Plant, Kincaid, IL (PJM) – 1,108 MW • Miami Fort Power Plant, North Bend, OH (PJM) – 1,020 MW • Newton Power Plant, Newton, IL (MISO) – 615 MW • Zimmer Power Plant, Moscow, OH (PJM) – 1,300 MW These plants, especially those operating in the irreparably dysfunctional MISO market, remain economically challenged. Today's retirement announcements are also prompted by upcoming Environmental Protection Agency filing deadlines, which require either significant capital expenditures for compliance or retirement declarations. IEF

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ICC

Mind, especially as cold weather approaches. We appreciate the utility companies for their responsiveness and action."

The ICC reminds customers to call the utility company if you have missed bill payments or you are struggling to pay your bill. No documentation or written proof is necessary, but you must make the phone call and verbalize your difficulty. This action will ensure a continuation of utility service. Deferred payment arrangements are also available for both residential and small business customers needing help managing their utility bill obligation during these difficult times.

On June 18, 2020, the Commission approved landmark COVID-19 utility relief agreements in Docket No. 20-0309, which were the product of negotiations between thirteen utility

companies and numerous consumer advocate groups and parties. In addition to extending the moratoriums on disconnections and late payment fees, the agreements provided historic consumer protections involving utility credit and collection practices, deferred payment agreements, temporary waivers of reconnection fees and new deposit requirements. IEF

Ameren Illinois Recognized For Safety and Storm Preparedness

Ameren Illinois' commitment to safety and weather preparedness has earned the energy company recognition from the National Weather Service (NWS) as a Weather-Ready Nation "Ambassador of Excellence."

Each year, representatives from the NWS review the 11,000-plus Weather-Ready Nation Ambassadors – government, non-profit, education, and private enterprises who commit to help improve the nation's readiness against extreme weather and climate events. Fewer than 100 organizations are accorded the "Excellence" distinction for exceptional performance. Chris Miller, a Warning Coordination Meteorologist for the National Weather Service based in Lincoln, nominated Ameren Illinois for the recognition this year.

"Ameren Illinois has gone above and beyond to prepare its customers, stakeholders, and employees for severe weather events," Miller said. "Their disciplined, process-focused culture embodies everything it means to be 'weather-ready'." IEF

Natural Gas Associations Band Together to Expand National Mutual Aid Program

The American Gas Association (AGA), American Public Gas Association (APGA), Northeast Gas Association (NGA), Southern Gas Association (SGA) and the MEA Energy Association (MEA) have announced the creation of a new, expanded National Mutual Aid Program.

“This Agreement will enhance the collaboration across the natural gas industry with the understanding that our combined resources can quickly restore comfort for communities that are hit by disasters, ensuring Americans have the energy they need and expect for comfortable homes, warm food and hot showers,” Karen Harbert, President and CEO of the American Gas Association, said. “Our members are committed to the safe and reliable delivery of natural gas and are proud to assist other utilities and communities in their time of need.”

When a disaster hits a region, the need to restore service can sometimes exceed the capacity of regional resources, and this is exactly the time when the AGA Mutual Assistance Program becomes so valuable. It is at this point that utilities outside the affected region can step and assist in the recovery.

Capitalizing on lessons learned from the American Gas Association’s Mutual Assistance Program, created in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in 2006, and similar APGA, NGA and SGA initiatives, this voluntary program allows natural gas utilities from across all of the participating associations to quickly respond to emergencies in a coordinated, efficient and timely manner.

The need to develop a uniform national mutual aid Agreement across the Associations was a key lesson learned from the Merrimack Valley incident in September 2018, which was the last time national mutual aid was required. Situations in which the program may be used include natural disasters, equipment malfunctions, accidents or other rare occasions where widespread natural gas service is interrupted.

For example, AGA’s mutual assistance program played a significant role in providing supplies, personnel, materials and equipment during the aftermath of Superstorm Sandy in 2012, where crews from natural gas companies throughout the country helped restore services for residential homes and businesses across the Northeast.

The National Mutual Aid Agreement will take effect January 1, 2021 and remain in place until December 31, 2025. The new Agreement will supersede the existing AGA and NGA/SGA Agreements. [IEF](#)

New NARUC-NASEO Mini Guide on State Commission and State Energy Office Engagement Released by NCEP

The National Council on Electricity Policy has announced the release of a new mini guide, *Engagement between Public Utility Commissions and State Energy Offices*, the fourth in its series promoting dialogue among state-level electricity decision makers by highlighting examples of successful engagement. Each mini guide features collaborative approaches, lessons learned and interviews with leading state and local decision makers.

The most recent mini guide, authored by the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners and the National Association of State Energy Officials, suggests that in response to the changing energy sector, the relationship between public utility commissions and state energy offices has evolved — and the benefits of collaboration have risen, too. Increased communication between these two state agencies is an important strategy for understanding and managing the quickly changing energy sector in their states, whether the transition is due to new legislation, executive action, utility goals, new technologies or changing economic factors and customer preferences.


The mini guide details ways in which public utility commissions and state energy offices interact, how these relationships can be strengthened and how governors’ state energy office directors and commissioners, as well as staff, can look to further engage with their counterparts. This mini guide features condensed excerpts from interviews with state energy office directors or staff and commissioners or commission staff from four states: Kentucky, Maryland, Minnesota and North Carolina.

Public utility commissioners and state energy directors are both essential decision makers who shape the electricity system across the states. They are also quite diverse in their roles and responsibilities, analytical capabilities, engagement approaches and historical levels of collaboration. As the electricity system is evolving, ensuring that each agency has an understanding of its peers can contribute to a more informed and equitable transition.

“This mini guide offers valuable insights into how and why public utility commissions and state energy offices operate in the ways that they do, while also offering numerous valuable examples and suggestions for how to enhance collaboration within those constructs,” said Danielle Sass Byrnett, NARUC Center for Partnerships & Innovation director. [IEF](#)

Current Issues Seminar in New Mexico Cancelled


The annual Current Issues Seminar hosted by the Center for Public Utilities at New Mexico State University that was to be held in the state Capitol of Santa Fe on September 27-30, 2020 has been cancelled.

Registration information for the 2021 Current Issues Seminar can be obtained by contacting Jeanette Walter of the Center for Public Utilities at 505-646-4812. 

2020 Virtual AGA Executive Conference

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, unfortunately we are unable to meet face-to-face in Dana Point, California this year, but we are pleased to announce that we will be holding a virtual Executive Conference on **Tuesday, October 13, 2020 from 11:00 am - 2:30 pm (ET)**.

Topics include the upcoming November elections, geopolitical events that could impact the energy utility sector, and innovations that could shape the future business models for utilities. Keynotes include Major Garrett, Peter Zeihan, and DOE Secretary, Dan Brouillette.

More details and final program will be available soon. Please plan to join us! 

Illinois Energy Forum is published monthly by the Illinois Energy Association, Springfield, Illinois. For questions or comments, please contact James Monk at **217-523-7348** or e-mail at jmonk@ilenergyassn.org.

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