

My Turn

Kit Carson rate hike defies common sense

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Kit Carson's recent ad in *The Taos News* (Dec. 2-8) states, "Myth: This rate increase penalizes those that try to conserve energy."

The ad fails to show how the statement is a myth. The ad explains the necessity of recovering fixed costs but does not address the absurdity of doing so by lowering the rates per kWh.

They say all must pay "their fair share" of the fixed costs.

This is true. But a "fair share" does not mean an equal share.

The way we pay our "fair share" is by paying in proportion to how much energy we each use. Those households

who use more should pay more. That is how we each pay our "fair share."

Kit Carson's interesting logic regarding this issue does not change the fact that those who use relatively little energy will pay far more (personally, I would be billed about 40-50 percent more each month) under the proposed change. In other words, in plain language, those who conserve energy will be penalized.

The primary purpose of a public utility (or corporation, or co-op) is to act as an entity that is capable of spending the fixed costs necessary to build and maintain the distribution network (or other infrastructure) that provides a public service. To recover those costs, and continue in operation, individual customers should then be billed in proportion to their use of the service.

That means paying per unit of service delivered, in this case kWh.

This concept is particularly important where society as a whole struggles to limit or conserve the quantity of consumption of the goods at issue. In this case, because production of electricity generally results in pollution, environmental damage, and other public health impacts, it is overwhelmingly in the public's interest to conserve electricity.

Therefore, it should be clear that the greater one's consumption of electricity, the greater one must pay.

Separating these costs from customers' actual use, as Kit Carson proposes, is in direct opposition to the interest of the public in conservation of energy.

Nonetheless, instead of charging more per kWh unit, they want to more than double the fixed charge, which will raise the electric bills of every small household I know.

Kit Carson's fixed charge is already far higher than I can recall seeing anywhere else I have lived. When I lived in Las Vegas, N.M., in 2008 and 2009, the fixed charges imposed by PNM were only \$2.80 to \$4 per month.

The proposed increase is a public interest and public health issue, and Kit Carson is on the wrong side this time.

Because conservation is in the public interest, customers need to be billed for how much product they use. The fixed charges are already too high. Let Kit Carson raise rates if they absolutely must, but not the fixed charges.

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