

While reviewing the resources on your website, whidbeyclimate.org, I read the article "Keep Our Electricity on the Path to Clean." In the opening paragraph, writer Linda Irvine states: "Now, as we face rising electricity costs, some are blaming these same climate commitments for our rising rates. But in fact, it is not our climate commitments, but the effects of climate change... that are driving rate increases."

I want to be clear that I genuinely support protecting our environment, preserving our local ecosystems, and pursuing clean energy. However, we must be honest about the fact that these transitions come with a steep cost that everyday utility customers will ultimately have to pay. Because our families are bearing this financial burden, I firmly believe we must strictly spend money on projects and policies that deliver real, measurable results.

Unfortunately, we are not seeing those results under current state policies. The Climate Commitment Act (CCA) pulled in over \$4.5 billion in its first three years, yet it has offered no substantial reduction in statewide CO2 emissions. Working families are paying historic premiums at the pump and on their utility bills for a program that is failing to deliver on its primary environmental promise.

This policy failure is compounding a stark contradiction in your own "Take Action" section. Your website encourages readers to submit a pre-written public comment to state regulators, but that link directs users to a campaign titled, "Deny PSE's Greedy Rate Hike!"

This creates a glaring logical conflict. On one hand, Ms. Irvine's piece justifies rising utility costs as a necessary response to environmental pressures. On the other hand, your official action item explicitly opposes those same rate increases, framing Puget Sound Energy's infrastructure requests as pure corporate "greed."

This messaging gap becomes even more troubling when we examine recent actions by the state legislature. Lawmakers passed House Bill 1589, a party-line bill forcing Puget Sound Energy to plan a transition away from natural gas. When nearly two million Washingtonians fought back by passing Initiative 2066 to protect energy choice, the state Supreme Court overturned it on a technicality, explicitly defying the clear will of the voters.

By systematically dismantling natural gas infrastructure, the state is forcing rapid, massive electrification onto an already fragile system. How does shutting off gas service and forcing hundreds of thousands of homes onto the grid help bridge our massive electricity gap? How does it keep costs low for working families when forced home conversions cost tens of thousands of dollars? Moving entirely to the electrical grid before we have built the capacity to handle it does not strengthen our infrastructure—it pushes it closer to a breaking point while driving utility bills to historic highs.

If local climate advocates want a modernized, clean energy grid, they cannot simultaneously support policies that overload our infrastructure, while demonizing the utility provider for attempting to fund the multi-billion-dollar upgrades required to build it. We need to focus our

resources on common-sense, results-driven environmental policies rather than costly, contradictory mandates. I welcome your perspective on how your organization reconciles this messaging gap for Island County residents.

Sincerely,
Robert 'Chili' Hicks