



Replace RG&E Organizational Sign On Letter for City Leadership

We, undersigned organizations call on City Council and the Mayor to lead in the face of the RG&E crisis: We ask you to move forward to issue legislation directing the administration to commission a Phase 1 Feasibility study that still covers scenarios for a public

transition at the City and County levels during this budget cycle (by June 2025) with the money you've already set aside for this purpose.

This legislation should use the draft study questions Metro Justice has developed as a starting point for RFP development, include elements that must be covered by the study; include timelines for action for the Administration within the time frame of 3 months or less, and direct the formation and appointment process for an advisory council including a representative of Metro Justice, a Designee of the President of the Labor Council, and other area stakeholders and experts. To the administration, we ask you to commit to readily support and implement this legislation without delay.

While the County Legislature voted down a public utility study, we still deserve a future in which we are no longer beholden to a profit-driven, foreign company for our basic energy needs. City residents are the hardest hit by RG&E's insane bills and neglect. We also deserve a future where the renewable energy transition is accessible to everyone, not just those who own their own homes and have good credit and upfront money.

As [new numbers show](#), our community is hurting and suffering under RG&E's predatory and reckless practices, and the Shut Off Crisis that seems to be intricately connected to the ongoing misbilling and accountability crises of the utility. The numbers are startling: 12,217 homes and 1,196 businesses were shut off in 2024, for a total of 13,413 shut offs. This number is triple the shut offs of 2023, and is an all-time high in recent times. At the same time, new profit numbers



for 2024 show that profits - just a few years ago \$90 million, rose to \$107 million in 2023 and are now \$122 million in 2024. The foreign corporation that owns RG&E is draining our community of resources while leaving us out in the cold.

Bills are too high. [Rochester's energy burden](#) (the proportion of income for energy) is third highest in the country, with 29% of all homes, or 44% of Black and Latino homes, paying between 6-25% of their total income on energy, in complete contradiction to the goals of the Commission on Racial and Structural Equity. An [updated report](#) from ACEEE shows that a quarter of low income households in Rochester pay 21% or more of their income to RG&E.

We as ratepayers already pay for all of RG&E's costs (operation, investments, taxes) plus profit, but have no say in what RG&E does. RG&E has no incentive to provide affordable and quality service because they're a foreign owned, for-profit corporation that must guarantee profit to Avangrid and Iberdrola, the 2nd largest utility corporation in the world. State regulators continue to reward RG&E with rate hikes, including the recent 34% distribution rate hike over the next 3 years, despite derelict infrastructure, multiple fines and investigations, an epidemic of ongoing billing errors, dysfunctional customer service, downsizing jobs, inaction on climate change, and NY state's own staff finding that RGE "provided vague, inconsistent answers or failed to provide necessary documentation" on finances and investments. This shows us that a locally-controlled public utility is the only real way to address the RG&E crisis, and we need an independent study as a first step.

Recent feasibility studies in San Diego, Decorah, Pueblo, Long Island, Maine, and Winter Park all found that Public utilities would result in significant cost savings in the rates from the beginning, even after factoring in the cost of purchasing the grid through our rates. Our community needs and deserves an independent study that will show us how much we can save with a public utility. Under NYS law, we can vote to buy out RG&E through a local referendum. The price would be paid off over 30 years through our rates, which would be lower from the very beginning, because we wouldn't pay for profit, and higher private sector borrowing rates. But we need the study to say by exactly how much. On average, public utilities are 13% cheaper, but nearby Fairport Electric is 70% cheaper. Winter Park FL and Massena NY, that transitioned relatively recently, are 30% cheaper than the utilities they separated from.

A Phase 1 Feasibility study that still covers the City and the County would not be significantly more expensive than a study that looks at the City alone, but would give the City all the options moving forward, including having the County actually lead on a public utility if that's what the feasibility study shows is most economically feasible.

Monroe County has abandoned City residents, but that doesn't mean that you have to. You are a City representative; I urge you to lead in our best interest. The vast majority of public utility transitions happen at the city level, whether those cities are large or small. We don't need anyone else to save us. **The City of Rochester can fund and commission a Phase 1 public**



utility study on its own. Please fully fund and commission a study on replacing RG&E with a public utility on the City and County level! City Residents can't afford to wait.

Signed - Organizations, Congregations and Businesses:

Dr Michi Wenderlich, for **Metro Justice**

Dan Maloney, for **UAW 1097**

Larry Knox, for **1199 SEIU**

Christina Christman, for **Federation of Social Workers, IUE-CWA 81381**

Rev Myra Brown, for **Spiritus Christi**

Pastor Wanda Wilson, for **RocACTS**

Dr. Dwight Fowler, for **United Christian Leadership Ministry (UCLM)**

Megan McRobert, for **Rochester Union of Nurses and Allied Professionals (RUNAP)**

Gary Bonadonna Jr, for **Rochester Regional Joint Board, Workers United**

Geovaira Hernández, for **Rochester Chapter of NY Working Families Party**

Dr LaShunda Leslie-Smith, for **Connected Communities, Inc.**

SEIU 200

Rev. Lane-Mairead Campbell, for **First Universalist Church**

Lisle Coleman, for **City Wide Tenant Union of Rochester**

Mike Evans, for **South East Area Coalition (SEAC)**

Rev. Lori Vail, for **Mary Magdalene Church**

Oscar Brewer Jr, for **Community Give Back**

Bleu Cease, for **Rochester Contemporary Art Center (RoCo)**

Kristina Dinino-Jeffords, for **ROC Cinema**

Shane Kramer, for **Key New York Real Estate Corp**

Kris Kimmel, for **Kris B. Kimmel Construction Drafting, inc.**

John Keevert, for **Environmental Justice Ministry of First Unitarian Church**

Rochester Democratic Socialists of America (ROCDSA)

Rochester Committee to End Apartheid

VOCAL-NY

Grant Marthinsen, for **490 Farmers**

Mike Coniff, for **Rochester Refugee Resettlement Services**

Grants Pass Resistance

Jewish Voice for Peace Rochester

Rochester Mutual Aid Network

Students for Justice in Palestine at the Rochester Institute of Technology (SJP@RIT)

Lentory Johnson, for **Generational Engagement Matters** (and UCLM member)

Thomas Graber, for **Roc Arts United**

Denise Young, for **Third Act - Rochester Chapter**

Green Party of Monroe County

Rachel Crawford, for **Akimbo Books**

Jenna Kirchner, for **The Unreliable Narrator**

Franlee Frank, for **Greenwood Books**



Alison Meyers, for **Writers and Books**

Sharon Lansing, for **Parkside Neighborhood Association (Irondequoit)**

Peacework CSA

Michele Brown, for **Michele & One L Co Salon**

Jayne Duffy, for **Hair by Jayme**

Robin Jaeckel, for **Henna Rising**

Seth Hebert, for **Hopefully Choir**

Individuals:

Bishop Roberts - New Hope Evangelical and UCLM

Rev Joyce Wilson Newton - Mt Olivet Baptist Church, UCLM

Gloria Forgione- Cabrini Parish and UCLM member

Angela Wallace, Community United Bulletin Board 585, VOCAL member

Justine Harris, Community Member

Jim Berger, Temple Sinai Member

Rome Celli, Community Member

Deni Mack, Member, St Francis Xavier Cabrini & GRCC Faith in Action Network

Monica Sherony, Assumption of our Lady Parish member

Vanessa Aviles, Restaurant Owner

Stephen Coniglio, Henrietta Democratic Committee member

The RED Coalition additionally includes: APWU Local 215, Greece Baptist Sustainability Team, Rochester Rotary NW and SW Chapters, Rochester Black Nurses Association, City Roots Community Land Trust, National Lawyers Guild - Rochester NY Chapter, Poor People's Campaign - Rochester Chapter, Color Brighton Green, Color Pittsford Green, Color Irondequoit Green, Color Henrietta Green, Being Black in the Burbs, Sunrise Rochester, Irondequoit Neighborhood Roundtable, North of East Main Neighbors United (NEMNU), Energy Democracy Alliance, Run On Climate, Clean Air Coalition

Organizations that have submitted letters of support for action include:

Rochester-Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative (RMAPI)

Climate Solutions Accelerator of the Genesee-Finger Lakes Region,

Rochester Area Interfaith Climate Action (RAICA),

Beechwood Neighborhood Association,

UR Student Senate