STATE PANEL REJECTS SD&G’s BID TO DROP ‘HIGH USAGE CHARGE’

Utility’s request was result of dramatic jumps in 2016 bills.

BY ROB NIKOLEWSKI

After thousands of San Diego Gas & Electric customers saw their bills go through the roof during last year’s sweltering summer, the utility slipped the California Public Utilities Commission a proposal to eliminate the so-called High Usage Charge.

That was a seriously mystifying move, if you ask me. The High Usage Charge was designed to encourage customers to use less power and it was among the few tools regulators had to get customers to reduce their usage.

But official reason for dropping the charge was that it was “cost-unsupportable.”

And we won’t quibble with that.

But the High Usage Charge was part of a package of rate hikes that went into effect in March 2016.

That’s when the summer heat started, and the utility complained it was squeezed between record usage and a freeze on retail rates. The utility had to turn to its parent utility, Southern California Edison, for some financial relief.

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"Many of us decided to become activists as individuals who would decide that hate would not win."