

OPINION

This can't keep happening

BY MARY CROMER

Kentucky Power is asking the Public Service Commission to approve yet another rate increase—its third since 2020. Bills have already risen nearly 40% in that period.



This time, Kentucky Power is asking for an average 14.9% increase in residential bills. But not everyone's bills would go up by the same amount. Instead, Kentucky Power wants to structure the increase so customers who use the least amount of electricity would see the greatest proportionate increase. A customer who uses only 600 kWh in one month would see their bills increase 28%. A customer who uses 2000 kWh would see their bill increase by 10%. It is clear that penalizing those who use the least electricity benefits Kentucky Power. The proposal ensures that it gets paid more regardless of how much customers may try to cut back on electricity use to save money.

Specifically, Kentucky Power proposes a two-tiered rate structure where the first 600 kWh of electricity used would cost around 16 cents per kWh, while any usage above 601 kWh would cost around 13 cents per kWh. At the same time, they propose to raise the base rate (the amount each customer must pay each month to have metered service) to \$26/month for usage at 2000 kWh/month or less and \$40/month for usage above 2000 kWh/month. The current base rate is \$20/month for all customers.

The company claims that it is looking out for those low-income customers who use a lot of electricity because their housing is old and inefficient. But, to meet the needs of those ratepayers, Kentucky Power should invest more in its weatherization and efficiency programs across its service territory. The company provided weatherization assistance to only 50 of its customers last year. The need is so much greater. Investments in household energy efficiency not only save customers money, but can also reduce the need for more expensive investments in new power plants.

The catch is, the company profits from new power plants, not from saving money for its customers.

Kentucky Power again claims the rate increase is necessary due to declining population—spreading costs across fewer customers means higher rates. But continual rate hikes can't be the solution. A 2022 Kentucky Data Center report projects that all counties in Kentucky Power's service territory will lose population between 2020 and 2050, with an average decline of 26.5%. Four counties are projected to lose over 40% of their population in that period, including Martin County at 43%. Higher rates will only accelerate this exodus as residents and businesses relocate to areas with more affordable energy.

At the PSC's Nov. 20 public hearing in Pikeville, all 50+ attendees opposed the increase. Many noted that electricity in neighboring states like Tennessee costs far less, with several saying they may leave because they can't afford their bills. Continually raising the cost of essential services like electricity will drive even more people away. Without a change in trajectory, fewer customers will pay increasingly more for deteriorating service. Something has to give.

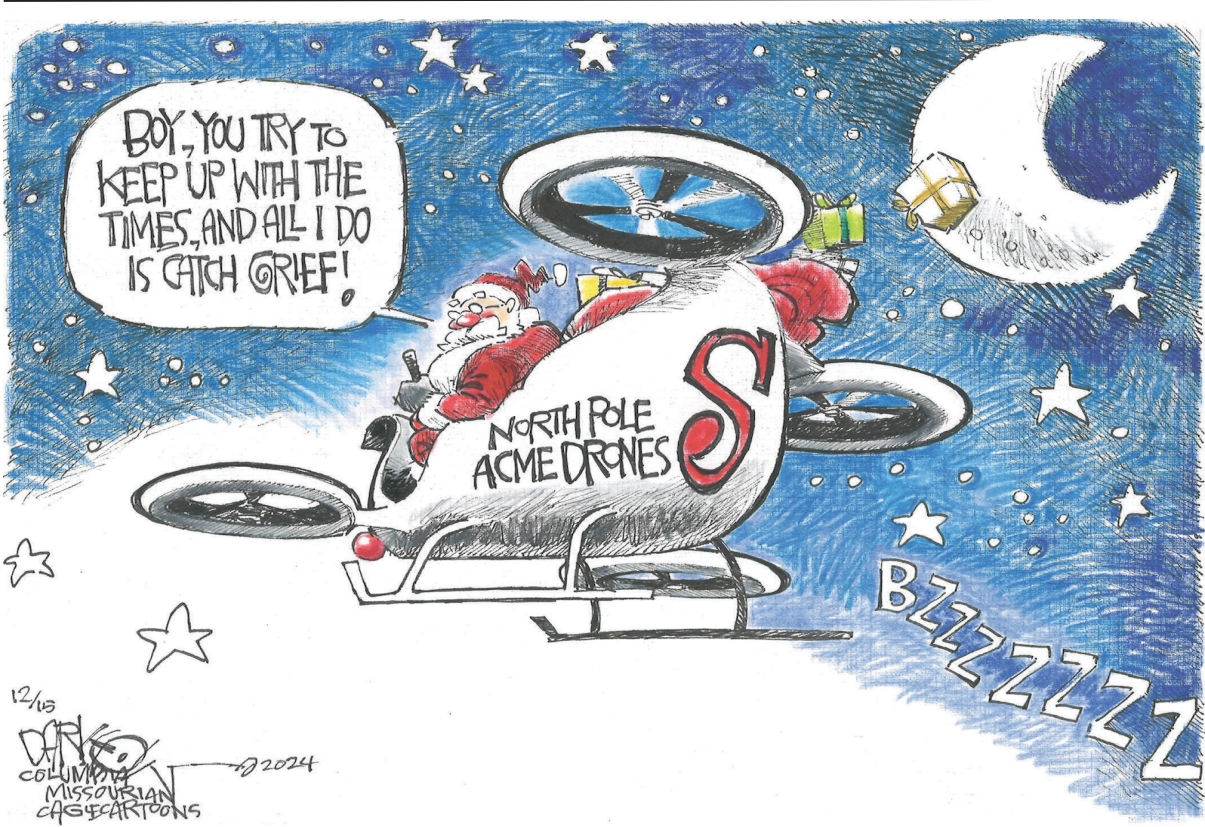
While Kentucky Power is wringing its hands about having to raise rates to meet its expenses, its parent company AEP posted a record \$1 billion profit in the third quarter of 2025. Company representatives stress that Kentucky Power isn't generating that profit. Still, there is a huge amount of profit being made. Kentucky Power is asking its customers to tighten their belts even more to budget for another in a succession of rate increases. It's time for the company to get serious about how it is going to continue to provide adequate, efficient, and reasonable service that is also affordable in the face of population decline.

Some rate increase is likely inevitable, and Kentucky Power will likely soon request another. But any approved increase should be tied to performance. The PSC should require the company to better serve low-income customers by setting specific goals to reduce disconnections for non-payment and customer arrearages. Future decisions on the company's allowed return on equity should then depend on meeting those goals. Linking profit to how the company serves its low-income customers in the face of population decline will force the company to solve the real problem: providing affordable energy service in a region with a declining population.

The Public Service Commission wants to hear from Kentucky Power customers. They are hosting two more public comment sessions: Dec. 18 at 5 p.m. at the Perry County Courthouse and Jan. 8 at 5 p.m. at the Ashland Transportation Center. At those sessions, each person who signs up to speak is given five minutes. Members of the PSC will be on hand, will provide a general presentation on the case, and can answer questions about the process they use to make their determination. At the Pikeville session, Kentucky Power had several representatives in the audience. It is a good opportunity to make your voice heard.

The PSC also accepts written comments by mail or by email. To submit written comments, include your name, whether you are a Kentucky Power customer, and reference Case No. 2025-00257. Mail comments to: PSC, P.O. Box 615, Frankfort, Kentucky 40602 or email to psc.comment@ky.gov.

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UNCOMMON SENSE

BY DR. GLENN MOLLETTE

One more Christmas



Dr. Glenn Mollette

How many more Christmases will you have?

Will you have 50 more? A dozen more? Maybe you will have just one more—maybe. There are no guarantees of a certain number of more Christmases.

My grandpa Hinkle suffered from heart issues. I remember him suffering an episode where his heart was bothering him and he put nitroglycerin pills under his tongue to calm the effects of his heart issues.

"I may never see another Christmas," he said as his pain eased off and he became more relaxed.

Seems like he did celebrate a couple more Christmases before he died at the age of 83.

Since we are not sure how many more Christmases we will enjoy, let us make this one good.

Focus your eyes and mind on the person of Christmas — Jesus. The Shepherds came to see him and left rejoicing at what they saw, heard and experienced.

Jesus gave them something to talk about, something to do and their story was compelling. The Wise Men traveled a long distance to worship Jesus. They did so because Jesus was worth it.

Jesus is worth it. He is worthy of our focus. Our eyes and minds are in so many places today. There is so much to hear and see, even if you never leave your house. The television, social media and more are constantly showing us lots of stuff that gets our attention but sometimes makes life fuzzy and mentally chaotic. Focusing on Jesus clears our minds and sharpens our perspective.

Do not max out. Maxing out is not fun or healthy. This means do not overspend money that you do not have. Do not try to do stuff that pushes you to the brink of exhaustion. What good does this do you or anyone if you go into a financial and mental hole over the holiday? Step

back, be reasonable, and use common sense in everything you want to do.

Reach out and love others. If this is your last Christmas, you want to let the significant people in your life know that you love and care about them. They will remember next Christmas that you loved them the previous Christmas.

You may want to do something creative or different for Christmas. Maybe there is someplace special you want to be on Christmas. This is not always possible. Many soldiers will be in distant lands on Christmas. Many relatives will be in distant towns for Christmas.

Be where you want to be on Christmas if you can. If you cannot, then try to make as many phone calls as possible to those people.

This Christmas, do not be sad, mad or bad; be joyful and celebrate this good day. If we are here,

then rejoice. If there is an empty chair at the table, remember that to be absent from the body is to be present with God, if we love and accept him. This is our hope: that those who are no longer with us are in a better place than we are, and that someday we will be with them in that beautiful place.

Regardless of how many Christmases you have left, be filled with joy for this one.

Dr. Glenn Mollette is the author of numerous books, songs and videos. Learn more on YouTube, Amazon and Spotify. He is also the founder of Newburgh Seminary/College, Safe Fresh Water and Keep Our Freedom.



BY KYLE LOVERN

Kyle's Corner

Stoops, Kiffin and other coaching changes

Being a head coach at a major university is a tough job. It is nothing to see coaches fired and others leave for what they believe are bigger and better jobs.

This past week was a great example of that trend as the coaching carousel continued in a big way.

After 13 seasons guiding the Kentucky football program, Mark Stoops was fired, the university announced Monday. He was the SEC's longest-tenured active coach at the time of his firing. No coach led the Wildcats longer. Fran Curci had the prior mark, spending nine seasons (1973 through 1981) as the Wildcats head football coach.

Stoops leaves as UK's all-time wins leader, with an on-field record of 82-80; however, he was 38-68 in the tough SEC. Kentucky and the NCAA recognize Stoops' official record as 72-80 (33-68). The Wildcats had to vacate every victory from their 10-win 2021 campaign because of NCAA violations.

Then on Monday evening, UK's Athletic Department announced the hiring of Oregon offensive coordinator Will Stein as the school's head football coach.

Stein, 36, is a Kentucky native who has emerged as one of the country's top offensive coordinators. Ironically, Stein played quar-

terback at Louisville from 2009 to 2012, appearing in 25 career games. Both of Stein's parents attended Kentucky and he grew up going to Wildcats games.

Perhaps the biggest coaching move in the country and the SEC was when Ole Miss coach Lane Kiffin left Oxford, Mississippi, for LSU. He got a lot of heat for this decision, but I can see both sides of the story. Of course more money is usually a big part of these decisions, but being able to recruit to a school with a big-time reputation like LSU and win a national championship is probably the tilting point.

The fact that both schools are in the same conference really hit a nerve.

Kiffin's team has had a great season and will make the playoffs. Despite his request to stay and coach before heading to Louisiana, Ole Miss leadership told Kiffin to hit the road and that he would not be able to coach his team anymore. Thus, he leaves the team as they head into the NCAA playoffs.

Kiffin's arrival in Baton Rouge ended a month-long saga in which he was the top subject of coaching searches by both Florida and LSU. Ole Miss reportedly tried to retain him, but the chance to join a historic program like LSU

lured Kiffin away. He leaves Oxford amid a historic season in which the Rebels are 11-1 and a top 10 ranking.

Meanwhile, Jon Sumrall was hired by Florida. He leaves Tulane after building a successful program there. He follows a 22-23 stint the Gators had under Billy Napier, who posted the worst record of any Florida coach of more than three seasons.

After Kiffin's departure, the Rebels named Pete Golding as their next coach. It will be his first head-coaching tenure in college football. He was the defensive coordinator at Ole Miss. He worked under Nick Saban as Alabama's defensive coordinator. He helped the Crimson Tide win three SEC titles and one national title before becoming the Rebels defensive coordinator in 2023.

Ryan Silverfield was named the Arkansas head coach following the Razorbacks' worst record (2-10) since 2019. He was the Memphis Tigers' coach for six seasons and had success there.

Auburn announced Alex Golesh as its next coach. He was the South Florida coach from 2023-25, posting a 23-15 record and a 2-0 bowl record.

Penn State, which fired head coach James Franklin during the season, is still looking for their man. Virginia Tech hired Franklin and he has already moved on.

Michigan State has hired former Northwestern coach Pat Fitzgerald to lead its football program.

The announcement came a day after the Spartans fired Jonathan Smith two seasons into his seven-year contract.

The theme here is that most coaches either move on after success at one school or are recycled after being fired by yet another college.

Some "mid-major" college coaches get the chance to move up to larger schools. Sometimes that really works out. Just ask Indiana fans how pleased they are with the hiring of Curt Cignetti, who came from James Madison University. All he has done is go undefeated in the Big 10 and has his team ranked No. 2 behind fellow conference foe and defending national champion Ohio State.

There are only a few major college coaching jobs available. It is big business for the colleges and also important for the rabid sports fans of these programs.

Even if a coach has had success in the past, it comes down to "What have you done for me lately?" If suddenly a team does not win many games and has a couple of subpar seasons, then his seat gets extremely hot.

It is a tough job at any level, but especially at a major college like Kentucky, LSU and many others.

Until next time.
(Kyle Lovern is a long-time journalist in the Tug Valley. He is now a retired freelance writer and columnist for the Mountain Citizen.)

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