



# Citizens Utility Board

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## **CUB UNVEILS FREE CALCULATOR TO HELP ILLINOIS RESIDENTS DETERMINE BEST ELECTRIC DEAL**

The Citizens Utility Board (CUB) has unveiled a free calculator to help residents determine how to save the most money in the Illinois electric market.

The CUB Power Calculator, at [www.CUBPowerCalculator.com](http://www.CUBPowerCalculator.com), is designed to help residents learn what they would pay with an alternative electric supplier versus the regulated utility, Commonwealth Edison.

“The era of easy savings is over and Illinois electric customers need to be savvy shoppers,” CUB Executive Director David Kolata said. “CUB wants to help Illinois families choose the right electric option for their household.”

From 2010 to 2013, electricity shoppers had an easier time finding plans that beat ComEd’s rate, because the utility was locked into higher-priced power contracts. However, the last of those expensive utility contracts expired in 2013, bringing significant changes to the market.

A June report by the Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC) Office of Retail Market Development indicated that ComEd is likely the best deal in the current market. Although there still may be money-saving offers—particularly with community aggregation deals—the ICC report found that over the last year customers who get their electric supply from ComEd saved \$73 million more than those who signed up with an alternative electric supplier.

“Navigating the waters of the Illinois electric market can be difficult,” Kolata said. “Hopefully, the CUB Power Calculator makes it easier for Illinoisans to make an educated choice.”

The calculator works for individual alternative supplier offers, as well as deals negotiated by communities (municipal aggregation). In a few steps, the tool allows consumers to type in the alternative supply rate they wish to compare to ComEd’s price, any extra monthly fees charged by the supplier, and their estimated monthly electricity usage for the summer (June through September 2015).

The calculator will then determine what the user would spend with the alternative supplier offer versus ComEd. (The tool, for now, only calculates summer months since ComEd’s rate is not known beyond September 2015, but CUB will update the calculator when it learns of the new price.)

Illinoisans can stay with ComEd and are under no obligation to switch to another supplier. Shoppers evaluating an alternative supplier offer should use CUB’s calculator and ask these questions:

- Is the advertised price a variable rate that will change monthly, or a rate that is fixed for a certain period?
- Is the alternative supplier price an introductory rate that could skyrocket after a few months?
- Does the offer force me to pay an exit fee if I want to get out of the contract? (Just this year, CUB successfully pushed for a new law that caps electric exit fees at \$50 for offers going forward.)

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Shoppers should know that it can take up to two months to switch to an alternative supplier, so a deal that looks good now may not be in the future. Consumers should not give out their electric bill or account number unless they are sure they want to switch. That's an invitation for an unethical marketer to switch a customer to an alternative supplier without his or her consent.

CUB is Illinois' leading nonprofit utility watchdog. Created by the Illinois Legislature, CUB opened its doors in 1984 to represent the interests of residential and small-business utility customers. Since then, it has saved consumers more than \$20 billion by helping to block rate hikes and secure refunds. For more information, call CUB's Consumer Hotline, 1-800-669-5556, or visit its award-winning website, [www.CitizensUtilityBoard.org](http://www.CitizensUtilityBoard.org).

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