

**STATE OF ILLINOIS  
ILLINOIS COMMERCE COMMISSION**

North Shore Gas Company	)	
The Peoples Gas Light and Coke Company	)	
Proposed Addition of a New Service Called	)	Docket No. 16-0033 and
Rider Purchase of Receivables	)	Docket No. 16-0034

**DIRECT TESTIMONY OF  
KEVIN WRIGHT ON BEHALF OF  
THE RETAIL ENERGY SUPPLY ASSOCIATION AND  
THE ILLINOIS COMPETITIVE ENERGY ASSOCIATION**

1 **I. BACKGROUND**

2 **Q. Please state your name and business address.**

3 A. My name is Kevin Wright. My business address is 1601 Clearview Drive,  
4 Springfield, Illinois 62704.

5 **Q. By whom are you employed and in what capacity?**

6 A. I am President of the Illinois Competitive Energy Association (“ICEA”).

7 **Q. How long have you been employed in your current position?**

8 A. I have been employed in my current position with ICEA since January 2009.

9 **Q. Please explain the job responsibilities and duties in your current position.**

10 A. I am responsible for monitoring, advocating, and defending Illinois’ competitive  
11 energy markets and being a trusted resource on competitive energy-related issues  
12 among regulators, legislators, the media, and the public. In addition, I am  
13 responsible for the administrative leadership, strategic planning, and overall  
14 efficiency of ICEA operations.

15 **Q. Please describe your educational background and relevant work experience**  
16 **prior to joining ICEA.**

17 A. I hold a Masters in Public Administration degree from the John F. Kennedy  
18 School of Government at Harvard University and a Bachelor of Arts degree in  
19 Political Science from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. From  
20 September 2002 until April 2003, I served as Chairman of the Illinois Commerce  
21 Commission (“ICC” or “Commission”) and served as an ICC Commissioner until  
22 February 2007. While serving on the Commission, I was Chair of the Electric  
23 Policy Committee, Co-Chair of the Post 2006 Initiative to competitive electricity  
24 markets, President of the Organization of MISO States, a NARUC Electricity  
25 Committee member, and Vice Chair of the FERC-State Joint Board for  
26 implementing the federal Energy Policy Act of 2005. I have over 25 years of  
27 Illinois state government experience and have held numerous senior-level  
28 administrative, legislative, and policy positions under two governors and one  
29 secretary of state.

30 **Q. Have you ever testified before a regulatory agency?**

31 A. Yes. I have testified before the Commission in ICC Docket No. 10-0138,  
32 Commonwealth Edison Company, Proposal to establish Rider PORCB (Purchase  
33 of Receivables with Consolidated Billing and to revise other related tariffs) in  
34 which I provided Direct and Rebuttal Testimony in the Initial proceeding and  
35 Direct and Reply Testimony on Rehearing. I also testified before the Commission  
36 in ICC Docket No. 13-0192, Ameren Illinois Company’s general gas rate  
37 proceeding. I provided Direct and Rebuttal Testimony regarding the creation of a

38 small-volume gas transportation program for Ameren’s residential and small  
39 commercial customers.

40 **Q. On whose behalf are you testifying today?**

41 A. I am testifying on behalf of the Retail Energy Supply Association (“RESA”)<sup>1</sup> and  
42 the Illinois Competitive Energy Association. RESA’s and ICEA’s petitions to  
43 intervene in this proceeding have been granted by the Administrative Law Judge.

44 **Q. Please describe briefly the operations of RESA and ICEA.**

45 A. RESA is a non-profit trade association of independent corporations that are  
46 involved in the competitive supply of electricity and natural gas. RESA and its  
47 members are actively involved in the development of retail and wholesale  
48 competition in electricity and natural gas markets throughout the United States.  
49 Some of the members of RESA have certificates from the Illinois Commerce  
50 Commission (the “Commission”) under Section 19-110 of the Public Utilities Act  
51 to operate as Alternative Gas Suppliers (“AGS”)<sup>2</sup> in the State of Illinois, including  
52 the service territories of North Shore Gas Company (“North Shore”) and The  
53 Peoples Gas Light and Company (“Peoples Gas”) (collectively referred to as the  
54 “Gas Utilities”), the Respondents in this proceeding. Currently, these AGS  
55 provide gas supply service to tens of thousands of customers of the Gas Utilities,

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<sup>1</sup> The comments expressed in this filing represent the position of the Retail Energy Supply Association (RESA) as an organization but may not represent the views of any particular member of the Association. Founded in 1990, RESA is a broad and diverse group of more than twenty retail energy suppliers dedicated to promoting efficient, sustainable and customer-oriented competitive retail energy markets. RESA members operate throughout the United States delivering value-added electricity and natural gas service at retail to residential, commercial and industrial energy customers. More information on RESA can be found at [www.resausa.org](http://www.resausa.org).

<sup>2</sup> The acronym “AGS” will be used herein to designate both Alternative Gas Suppliers and Alternative Gas Supplier.

56 including participants in their Choices for You Programs, which are small-volume  
57 gas transportation, or Choice, programs.

58 ICEA is a 501(c)(6) business trade association of retail electric suppliers and  
59 natural gas suppliers that strives to preserve and enhance customer choice and  
60 competition in the electric and natural gas supply industries in Illinois.<sup>3</sup> ICEA’s  
61 focus and mission is to foster a positive regulatory and legislative climate that  
62 promotes competitive retail and wholesale energy markets; educate policymakers,  
63 legislators, and the public that electric and natural gas competition provides costs  
64 savings and value-added products to customers; and defend against threats that  
65 would turn back-the-clock on retail competition and customer choice.

66 **Q. Please summarize your testimony.**

67 A. Peoples Gas and North Shore have put together an effective purchase of  
68 receivables (“POR”) program which incorporates cost recovery within the  
69 program and ensures the ability of the utility to terminate for the full amount of  
70 the receivable. In fact, as explained by Ms. Debra E. Egelhoff, in her direct  
71 testimony on behalf of the Gas Utilities, their filing in this proceeding resulted  
72 from a Settlement Agreement (dated June 22, 2015) between RESA and the Joint  
73 Applicants in Ill. C. C. Docket 14-0496 (Wisconsin Energy Corporation, Integrys  
74 Energy Group, Inc., Peoples Energy LLC, North Shore and Peoples Gas), in  
75 which the Commission approved the reorganization of North Shore and Peoples

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<sup>3</sup> The comments expressed in this filing represent the position of the Illinois Competitive Energy Association (ICEA) as an organization but many not represent the views of any particular member of the Association. Founded in October 2008, ICEA represents some of the most active retail energy suppliers operating in the Illinois retail electric and natural gas markets and serving residential, small commercial, commercial and industrial customers. More information on ICEA can be found at [www.illinoiscompetitiveenergy.com](http://www.illinoiscompetitiveenergy.com)

76 Gas. Subsequent to that Settlement Agreement, representatives of the Gas  
77 Utilities met with representatives of RESA and discussed their proposal for a POR  
78 Program and their proposed tariffs to implement such a program.

79 In my direct testimony, I explain why a POR program is necessary for the natural  
80 gas competitive market in Illinois to thrive and why a POR program offers  
81 benefits for AGS and customers, without a detriment to the Gas Utilities.

82 **Q. Are the POR Program tariffs filed by the Gas Utilities consistent with the**  
83 **Settlement Agreement and the discussions between the Gas Utilities and**  
84 **RESA?**

85 A. Yes. Each of the Gas Utilities' proposed Rider Purchase of Receivables is  
86 consistent with the Settlement Agreement and the discussions held pursuant to  
87 that Settlement Agreement.

88 **Q. Please explain what a POR Program is.**

89 A. A POR Program is designed to have the utility purchase the receivable of a retail  
90 supplier. The receivable then becomes a utility owned debt. The supplier is paid  
91 its bill amount to the customer less a percentage to recover potential uncollectible  
92 risk. This percentage is often referred to as the discount rate.

93 **Q. In general, what are the advantages from a public policy perspective of**  
94 **having a POR program?**

95 A. There are several crucial advantages to having a POR program from a public  
96 policy perspective. First, POR allows for a single collection point for a customer  
97 who receives a single bill. In addition, as a vehicle through which AGS'  
98 receivables can be purchased, POR programs promote retail competition by

99 enabling competitive suppliers to offer service to all residential and small  
100 commercial customers, regardless of their income level or the size of their load.  
101 This results in a broader segment of consumers enjoying the benefits of retail  
102 competition, including lower prices and the ability to select from multiple energy  
103 options. Thus, POR programs facilitate market entry by competitive suppliers,  
104 which, in turn, creates a greater choice of rate and service options for customers  
105 and, in particular, residential customers. I will discuss these benefits in more  
106 detail in the remainder of my testimony.

107 **II. IMPORTANCE OF A POR PROGRAM**

108 **Q. Why is it important for the Gas Utilities to implement POR programs?**

109 A. AGS use utility consolidated billing to bill their products. This allows for a single  
110 bill for all gas charges to be sent to the customer. Because they are the owners of  
111 the bill, utilities are better suited for collections and can do so at a lower cost.  
112 Under the current system, the Gas Utilities bill AGS' customers and AGS'  
113 customers then make payments to the Gas Utilities which they later remit to the  
114 AGS. A POR is the next logical step to enable the Gas Utilities to take full  
115 control of the billing and collections process.

116 Absent a POR Program, AGS have to separately collect non-payments from  
117 customers who are simultaneously in collection with the Gas Utilities for charges  
118 that appeared on a single bill. Each AGS would have to develop its own systems  
119 and employ its own labor to engage in these activities which comes at a higher  
120 cost because the AGS only knows the amount to be applied to its portion of the  
121 bill and must do further research to understand whether or not the non-payment

122 was through utility error or true customer non-payment, prior to beginning the  
123 collection process. Once collection is in place, fees for the collection process are  
124 placed on the customer. In the case of a non-POR bill, the customer would face  
125 collection fees from two entities rather than one. By reducing the collection costs  
126 to AGS, AGS can pass that savings on to customers with lower prices.  
127 Finally, a POR program will level the playing field so that AGS can effectively  
128 compete against the Gas Utilities to supply gas to customers. As I will further  
129 explain, utilities have inherent advantages when it comes to collecting outstanding  
130 accounts from customers. Without the advantage of a POR program, it is difficult  
131 for AGS to compete with the utility, and, as a result, fewer AGS have entered into  
132 the market in Illinois because it is not cost effective to do so.

133 **Q. You mentioned that utilities have an advantage when it comes to customer**  
134 **collections. Can you explain this?**

135 A. Yes, utilities are better suited for collections because they have greater recourse in  
136 the event a customer does not pay. The utility can shut off a customer's gas  
137 supply for non-payment whereas an AGS cannot shut off delivery of gas to the  
138 customer's home. The AGS' only recourse is to stop supplying gas to the  
139 customer and turn the account back to the utility. In this scenario, the customer  
140 still continues to have gas delivered to his or her home by the utility. This also  
141 creates confusion for customers who may end up in collection with their AGS but  
142 never have a disruption in service and, because they paid the utility, might assume  
143 the AGS was also paid.

144 **Q. Would you please explain why there is confusion for transportation**  
145 **customers in the collection process today?**

146 A. Today, if a Choice customer makes a partial payment, the utility is paid first. So  
147 if a customer only pays enough each month to cover his or her utility past due  
148 amount, a retail supplier will receive zero money. If a supplier drops the  
149 customer, the customer's debt to the supplier will only appear on the utility bill  
150 for 45 days from the final due date. After that, if the customer still has not paid  
151 the amount, it reverts to the supplier for collection.

152 It is at that point where customer confusion can occur. The customer will say he  
153 or she paid Peoples Gas, for example, and the AGS should collect from it. The  
154 AGS' system will show that Peoples didn't send payment. However, the supplier  
155 does not receive a copy of the customer's bill, nor does the supplier know the  
156 actual amount paid each month. Therefore, it is the customer's responsibility to  
157 prove that he or she paid enough to cover the past due amount to Peoples Gas. It  
158 is also the customer's responsibility to prove to the supplier that Peoples Gas  
159 received the funds. Finally, many customers will not understand the fact that  
160 while the supplier's charges have been removed from the Peoples Gas' bill, that  
161 does not mean that it is no longer a debt owed to the supplier.

162 POR resolves all of these issues. It ensures that the entity which has a copy of the  
163 bill and knows how payments were applied to the total bill is the single collection  
164 entity from start to finish. Also, when the utility purchases the receivables, they  
165 are amounts owed to the utility, just the same as the utility's other charges, such  
166 as for distribution service.



167 **Q. Why does having limited recourse disadvantage AGS from collecting past**  
168 **due amounts from customers?**

169 A. If a customer knows that there are consequences for not paying a bill, that  
170 customer is much more likely to pay the bill. For example, if a customer thinks  
171 that non-payment will result in the shut off of natural gas to his or her home, the  
172 customer will be more likely to pay the bill. On the other hand, the customer is  
173 much less likely to pay his or her bill when a customer knows there are limited  
174 consequences for not paying a bill, such as the case with an AGS.

175 **Q. Is the rate of collection increased when the same party that bills customers**  
176 **collects on the outstanding accounts?**

177 A. Yes. Utilities bill AGS' customers, and the AGS' customers pay the utility which  
178 later remits the payment to the AGS. However, after a customer account becomes  
179 past due, the utility relinquishes all collections responsibility and it becomes the  
180 AGS' responsibility to collect on the past due accounts. It is more difficult for  
181 AGS to collect on these accounts because the customer is not accustomed to  
182 receiving a bill from the AGS. The customer is less likely to view the AGS as  
183 having a continuing business relationship and therefore the customer is less likely  
184 to pay. Moreover, the customer may be confused as to why he or she is receiving  
185 a bill from the AGS when the bill had previously come from the utility.

186 **Q. Ultimately, what is the effect of the utility's inherent advantage associated**  
187 **with collections?**

188 A. The effect is that a utility has much more success at collecting from customers  
189 and thus utilities receive a greater percentage of the accounts billed. This is so

190 even though a utility's cost of collection is typically less. Ultimately this means  
191 an AGS' bad debt expense (amount on unpaid accounts plus cost of collections) is  
192 much greater than a utility's bad debt expense.

193 **Q. How does a high bad debt expense harm AGS?**

194 A. This is harmful for AGS because a high bad debt expense increases the cost an  
195 AGS incurs in serving customers. The negative effect of this additional cost is  
196 compounded by the fact that a high bad debt expense compared to that of a utility  
197 makes it more difficult for an AGS to compete. An AGS factors its overall costs  
198 into the pricing it offers customers. Therefore, if an AGS' overall costs are  
199 increased, the AGS must increase prices in order to make it profitable to offer  
200 service to customers. In addition, a utility's price is based on its cost to serve  
201 customers. If a utility has a significantly lower cost (because of a lower bad debt  
202 expense) than an AGS' cost, then a utility will have a lower price to customers.  
203 Obviously, if a utility's price is lower than the AGS, more customers will stay  
204 with the utility, and the AGS will find it very hard to be competitive.

205 **Q. How does a POR program help AGS?**

206 A. Because the utility purchases these receivables without recourse, the AGS will  
207 receive payment for the customer's account regardless of whether a customer  
208 pays. This means that an AGS no longer has to assume the risk of a customer not  
209 paying or expend resources on collecting past due accounts. While the AGS may  
210 receive less than the total amount due on the accounts, this reduced revenue is  
211 more than made up for by the AGS' elimination of bad debt expense and  
212 collection costs. As I explained previously, because of an AGS' inherent

213 limitations when it comes to collections, an AGS' bad debt expense can be quite  
214 high.

215 **Q. Do the Gas Utilities' POR Programs allow suppliers to avoid collection risks?**

216 A. No. Initially, Suppliers will pay for the amount of uncollectible risk of Peoples  
217 Gas and North Shore as determined by their Rider UEA filing. After an initial  
218 term, suppliers will pay the uncollectible risk associated with the accounts they  
219 serve.

220 The result of this well designed program is that suppliers bear the risk of customer  
221 non-payment, while providing customers a single point of contact for collection.

222 **Q. Do the Gas Utilities' POR Programs allow suppliers to include non-**  
223 **commodity items on the bill?**

224 A. No. The only charges eligible for recovery under the POR Program are those  
225 associated with providing the commodity service.

226 **Q. Does the POR Program allow suppliers to get paid disputed amounts?**

227 A. No, the contract between the supplier and the Gas Utilities has two requirements  
228 on this point. First, if the customer has a dispute the supplier must notify Peoples  
229 Gas or North Shore. Second, if the dispute is not resolved after the supplier was  
230 paid, then the supplier must remit the funds back to Peoples Gas or North Shore.  
231 This is in addition to the current practice of removing disputed charges from a  
232 bill.

233 **III. POR PROGRAM'S EFFECT ON RATE PAYERS**

234 **Q. Will the POR program benefit customers?**

235 A. Yes, the POR program will benefit customers. Beyond reducing a customer's  
236 confusion and negative experience from dealing with two separate collection  
237 entities over a single bill, a POR program leverages the utility's inherent  
238 advantage in collections to reduce the net bad debt expense for all customers.  
239 Rather than every supplier expending resources to collect on accounts with  
240 limited success, a POR program reduces the redundancy of collections  
241 expenditures and enhances the success of collecting on unpaid accounts. This net  
242 cost reduction will be passed on to customers through lower prices and more  
243 diverse products offered by AGS.

244 **Q. You say that AGS will pass on their cost reduction by lowering customer**  
245 **prices. How can you be sure of this?**

246 A. In a competitive natural gas market AGS will have to reduce prices if they wish to  
247 remain competitive with other suppliers, as well as the utilities. Currently in the  
248 Gas Utilities' service territories, many AGS are not offering products because  
249 their costs are too high to be profitable. However, if the costs to AGS are reduced  
250 substantially by the implementation of a POR, AGS will be able to enter the  
251 market with the ability to offer a lower price to customers. As more AGS enter  
252 the market, the existing AGS will have to lower their prices if they wish to be  
253 competitive.

254 **Q. In sum, are you saying that a POR program will ultimately result in lower**  
255 **prices and a wider array of competitive products customers?**

256 A. Yes. A POR program will enable AGS to offer customers lower prices, and  
257 ultimately make the natural gas market in the Gas Utilities' service territories  
258 more competitive.

259 **IV. BENEFITS OF A POR PROGRAM**

260 **Q. So far you have described a POR program and its effect on parties. Can you**  
261 **go into more detail about the specific benefits of a POR program?**

262 A. Yes the specific benefits to POR are many, as I detail below:

- 263 • Reduced customer confusion regarding collections. POR allows one party (the  
264 utility) to provide a consolidated bill for supply and delivery charges, and follow  
265 through with the customer on all collection issues associated with the bill, thus  
266 reducing customer confusion. Further, POR avoids the potential complications of  
267 proration where misapplications of payments occur, problematic synchronization  
268 of receivable balances between the utility and supplier, and the potential of  
269 inconsistent information being provided to consumers.
- 270 • Leverage existing systems, reducing overall costs. With POR, the utility  
271 leverages already-existing infrastructure to manage receivables, including: IT,  
272 Accounting, Call Center and telephone systems, Collections, and Field Systems to  
273 handle the receivable throughout the lifecycle. For a customer who is delinquent  
274 on the distribution charge, he or she is also delinquent on the commodity charge  
275 (given the priority of payment utilized by Peoples Gas and North Shore) which  
276 means the utility would already be contacting the customer regarding the non-  
277 payment, so simply including the entire bill that is delinquent in the recovery

278 mechanisms adds little additional effort to the collections call. Without POR,  
279 AGSs must duplicate these systems, increasing overall costs.

280 • Continuity of message and consistency in treatment of receivables. When the  
281 utility owns the receivable, each customer is subject to the same rules, efforts and  
282 processes. This allows for the same protections for all customers, and a  
283 continuity of efforts without duplicating efforts or presenting conflicting  
284 messages.

285 • Expanded access to the competitive market for higher risk customers. Without a  
286 POR, AGS have to focus on enrolling only the most credit-worthy individuals,  
287 which concentrates the best paying customers with AGS, leaving the more credit-  
288 challenged customers with the utility. This disadvantages the credit-challenged  
289 customers by eliminating or greatly reducing their access to the competitive  
290 market and the products only offered on the competitive market (such as fixed bill  
291 or guaranteed savings products). With POR, these concerns are greatly mitigated  
292 and credit-challenged customers gain much greater access to the competitive  
293 market. Further, without POR, suppliers are less likely or even able to offer  
294 guaranteed discounts off of the utility's default rate, since the risk or unknown  
295 regarding the ability to recover the charges without POR is too significant to  
296 allow for the guaranteed discounted rates on any consistent basis.

297 • Efficient utilization of effective recovery tools. Utilities possess tools to ensure  
298 most consumers who can pay for their natural gas do pay for their natural gas; the  
299 most effective of which is the ability to threaten to disconnect service for non-  
300 payment and require payment of past due amounts and/or security deposits to

301 allow reconnection to occur. AGS do not have this tool available to them.  
302 Because the Gas Utilities will purchase the receivables from participating AGS on  
303 a non-recourse basis, the Gas Utilities will have the same recovery tools for the  
304 purchased receivables that they would have had they sold the supply to customers.

- 305 • Diminished counterparty risk. One of the risks that AGS currently must factor  
306 into their pricing is the risk that their counterparties will not be in a position to  
307 pay their bills. Counterparty risk is greatly diminished through a POR program.  
308 The regulated nature of a utility generally ensures that it will recover its costs of  
309 doing business, and will also experience a relatively consistent rate of return  
310 through economic cycles of growth and contraction. With POR, where the  
311 counterparty is a regulated utility, with an approved rate of return, an AGS'  
312 counterparty risk is virtually zero. Again, this is not just a benefit to AGS—it  
313 creates the conditions for a more vibrant competitive market that will provide  
314 benefits to customers.

### 315 **POR IN OTHER STATES**

316 **Q. Are there any natural gas utilities in other states that have POR programs?**

317 A. Yes. Many natural gas utilities throughout the country have successfully  
318 implemented POR programs as part of their customer Choice programs.

319 **Q. Do electric utilities offer POR programs as well?**

320 A. Yes. In Illinois, both ComEd and Ameren have POR programs. Electric utilities  
321 in New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio and Maryland offer POR programs  
322 as well.

323 **Q. What has the experience been with POR in Illinois?**

324 A. It is well known that the Illinois residential competitive market has expanded  
325 greatly since the implementation of POR. POR is not the only factor that has  
326 contributed to the success of the competitive electric market. To be sure, the  
327 relatively high utility price-to-compare resulted in high levels of customer  
328 switching in 2011 and 2012. Governmental aggregation has also been a major  
329 factor. However, without POR, several suppliers offering products likely would  
330 not be in the market and governmental aggregation would likely not have been as  
331 effective or vibrant as it has been. POR is part of the fundamental foundation for  
332 competition, without which large-scale residential customer switching simply  
333 would not have occurred. The availability of POR for electric customers and the  
334 lack of POR for gas customers have resulted in very different rates of  
335 participation in the Choice Programs of electric and gas utilities. For electric  
336 utilities, the following are the percentages of residential customers participating in  
337 their choice programs as of May 2015<sup>4</sup>:

- 338 ComEd—61.5%
- 339 Ameren (Zone 1)—53.0%
- 340 Ameren (Zone 2)—68.5%
- 341 Ameren (Zone 3)—56.9%

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<sup>4</sup> Illinois Commerce Commission’s Office of Retail Market Development 2015 Annual Report, submitted pursuant to Section 20-110 of the Public Utilities Act (June 2015) (ORMD Electric Report), page 22.



342 In contrast, the following are the percentages, as of December 2014, of residential  
343 customers participating in the choice programs of Illinois gas utilities having  
344 choice programs<sup>5</sup>:

345 Peoples Gas—13.2%

346 North Shore—10.6%

347 Nicor Gas—11.7%

348 **Q. Why hasn't Illinois seen higher levels of participation in natural gas**  
349 **customer Choice programs?**

350 A. Where POR does not exist, fewer suppliers engage in the market and the products  
351 offered are less dynamic and less likely to guarantee a discount. For example, the  
352 Commission's Office of Retail Market Development's ("ORMD") latest annual  
353 report on retail electric markets in Illinois indicated that, as of April 2015, 10  
354 ARES in Ameren's service territory posted 24 residential offers on the  
355 Commission's pluginillinois website and 30 ARES in ComEd's service territory  
356 posted 75 residential offers on that site. (ORMD Electric Report, p. 33) In  
357 contrast, ORMD's latest annual report on retail gas markets in Illinois indicated  
358 that, as of August 2015, 7 AGS in Peoples Gas' service territory posted 24  
359 residential offers on the Commission's website, 6 AGS in North Shore's service  
360 territory posted 21 residential offers on the site, and 8 AGS in Nicor Gas' service  
361 territory posted 29 residential offers on the site. (ORMD Gas Report, p. 12)

362 States without POR programs, where supplier consolidated bill options with  
363 disconnect are not available, have not seen significant migrations because AGS'

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<sup>5</sup> Illinois Commerce Commission's Office of Retail Market Development Annual Report on the Development of Natural Gas Markets in Illinois, submitted pursuant to Section 19-130 of the Public Utilities Act (October 2015) ("ORMD Gas Report"), page 10

364 collection and bad debt expenses in those states greatly increase the cost for AGS  
365 to serve customers. Because it costs more to serve customers, it is more difficult  
366 for AGS to offer dynamic pricing to all customers, and without offers being more  
367 widely available, customers do not switch to AGS. Without a POR program,  
368 AGS must limit their customer offers to only the most credit-worthy customers,  
369 further limiting the customer pool to which AGS market to high-credit-worthy  
370 customers and increasing the costs because those customers are not identifiable  
371 without credit reviews. This issue is acknowledged in the ORMD Gas Report  
372 which states, “the lack of an option to sell receivables to the gas utility for an  
373 AGS’ residential and small commercial customers could be a reason why the  
374 number of suppliers in this market is substantially smaller than the number of  
375 suppliers in the residential and small commercial retail electric market”.<sup>6</sup>

376 **Q. Can you expand on your discussion of natural gas POR programs in other**  
377 **states?**

378 A. Yes. Many gas utilities in many states have successfully implemented POR  
379 programs. POR is part of Choice programs in at least 9 other states, including  
380 Indiana (Northern Indiana Public Service Company), Ohio (Dominion East Ohio,  
381 Columbia Gas, Vectren, Duke), Michigan (Consumers Energy, Michigan  
382 Consolidated (MichCon) a version of POR), Pennsylvania (Columbia Gas of  
383 Pennsylvania, PECO, NFG), Kentucky (Columbia Gas of Kentucky), New York  
384 (Orange and Rockland, Central Hudson, National Grid, National Fuel, ConEd,  
385 Keyspan, Rochester Gas and Electric), Maryland (Baltimore Gas & Electric,  
386 Washington Gas & Light), Wyoming (Source Gas) and Nebraska (Source Gas).

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<sup>6</sup> *Id.*, p. 18.

387 **Q. What has been the effect of POR programs on competitive markets in other**  
388 **states?**

389 A. Utility POR programs have increased competition in a number of states.  
390 States without POR programs have not seen significant migrations because AGS'  
391 bad debt expenses in those states greatly increases the cost for AGS to serve  
392 customers. Because it costs more to serve customers, it is more difficult for AGS  
393 to offer competitive pricing, and without competitive prices, customers do not  
394 switch to AGS. Further, without a POR program AGS must limit their customer  
395 offers only to the most credit-worthy customers, further limiting the customer  
396 pool to which AGS market.

397 **Q. Can you explain in more detail the success of POR programs in other states?**

398 A. Yes, in most states with POR programs there are many suppliers actively offering  
399 a multitude of products to residential natural gas consumers. A good example is  
400 Ohio where there is an over 50% migration rate and 72 suppliers are marketing to  
401 residential customers<sup>7</sup>.

402 **Q. Do you think the implementation of a POR program in the Gas Utilities'**  
403 **service territories will have the same effect it has had in other states?**

404 A. Yes, the evidence is overwhelming that POR contributes to increased customer  
405 access to the benefits of participation in the competitive market and, therefore,  
406 increased customer migration. The implementation of POR would be a  
407 significant step towards achieving a competitive and robust natural gas market in  
408 the Gas Utilities' service territories.

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<sup>7</sup> Natural Gas Customer Choice Programs in Ohio, Customer Enrollment Levels As of December 2015, Ohio Public Service Commission.

409 V. **CONCLUSION**

410 Q. **Does this conclude your direct testimony?**

411 A. Yes, it does.

**NOTICE OF FILING**

Please take note that on May 25, 2016, I caused to be filed via e-docket with the Chief Clerk of the Illinois Commerce Commission, the attached Direct Testimony of Kevin Wright on behalf of the Illinois Competitive Energy Association and the Retail Energy Supply Association in this proceeding.

/s/GERARD T. FOX  
Gerard T. Fox

**CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**

I, Gerard T. Fox, certify that I caused to be served copies of the foregoing Direct Testimony of Kevin Wright on behalf of the Illinois Competitive Energy Association and the Retail Energy Supply Association upon the parties on the service list maintained on the Illinois Commerce Commission's eDocket system for Ill. C. C. Dockets 16-0033/16-0034 (consolidated) via electronic delivery on May 25, 2016.

/s/ GERARD T. FOX  
Gerard T. Fox