

SENATOR
ANDREA STEWART-COUSINS
DEMOCRATIC CONFERENCE LEADER



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Secretary Kathleen Burgess
Department of Public Service
3 Empire State Plaza
Albany, NY 12223-1350

August 4, 2014

Dear Secretary Burgess:

On behalf of my constituents in the 35th State Senate District, I am writing in opposition to the Joint Proposal by United Water New Rochelle and United Water Westchester to raise water rates. There are two rate increase options. One would raise water rates by as much as 14.06% in the first year. The other -- the levelization option -- would raise water rates by 8.23%. Neither of these options is acceptable.

I support the Statement of Opposition filed on behalf of the Municipal Consortium, which includes municipalities within my district such as the city of New Rochelle, and the villages of Dobbs Ferry, Hastings and Ardsley.

Families are struggling to make ends meet in this economy, and this utility is requesting unacceptable increases far above other rising costs. As the Municipal Consortium states, "The recommended rate increases over three years is approximately three times the current rate of inflation," (as measured by the CPI Index for all items). Consider these comparisons as well: the latest cost-of-living increase for Social Security benefits and SSI payments is only 1.5%, and employers are planning to give an average pay increase of 2.9% according to a survey by Towers Watson Data Services. Customers are being asked to pay double, even triple these percentage amounts, just for water. Again, this is unacceptable.

A merger in the public interest should save money and reduce water rates or hold water rates to a minimal increase, more in line with what our economy and my constituents are in a position to pay. The proposed merger between United Water New Rochelle (UWNR) and United Water Westchester (UWW) should not be made at the expense of utility customers.

I urge you and the Public Service Commission to deny the rate increase for UWNR.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrea Stewart-Cousins". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Andrea Stewart-Cousins
State Senator, 35th District
Democratic Conference Leader