



**CUB** **CITIZENS**  
**UTILITY BOARD**  
**ANNUAL REPORT 2020**

## Letter from the Executive Director

Out of darkness, light. Out of COVID-19, Wisconsin emerges, scarred but stronger. Out of a devastating funding setback, CUB emerged, resilient and moving forward.

As we look back and look ahead, above all I'm grateful. Because of your commitment we have the voice we do at the PSC. Because of your support our efforts to boost consumer advocacy in the years ahead have borne fruit. Citizens across the state will be the better because of it.

Because of your continued support, we've been able to focus on those hit hardest by the COVID-19 pandemic, save more than \$150 million for Wisconsin utility customers, and craft a better, more sustainable funding model that will accomplish more for you in the years ahead.

It's been a long road. The wrenching and surprising decision of the Joint Finance Committee in 2015 left CUB scrambling to find ways to keep going.

*Your support sustained us then.* You responded to urgent appeals. Your support sustained us as we've worked, brick by brick, to boost advocacy for Wisconsin citizens and small businesses.

It all paid off this spring, when the Legislature voted unanimously to give CUB a needed financial boost. The solution: every residential and small business customer of a privately owned utility in Wisconsin will chip in a couple cents a month to have a voice.

It's all because of YOU. Your contributions are still crucial to checking utilities' sway over politicians and regulators. Your contributions let those in power know that people care. Your contributions fortify CUB against another sudden setback.

**You are the driving force behind CUB!**

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in white ink that reads "Tom Content". The signature is stylized and includes a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**Tom Content**

## Folks in Need Are Top of Mind for CUB

**As individuals, communities, and as a country we learned many lessons from 2020.** One crucial lesson is that we need to focus on the economic hardships and inequities faced by many of us and ignored by others. **2020 brought to the fore the systemic challenges of a haves and have-nots economy with many households not having savings to fall back on in hard times.**



CUB responded to these challenges faced by many in our community by providing educational resources for customers, advocating to keep utilities from shutting off customers from essential services during the pandemic, and by putting a spotlight on how household energy burdens vary across neighborhoods and the state.

To address energy burden, CUB is persuading utilities to pay more attention and work to analyze critical data. **CUB's collaborating with low-income advocates and underrepresented communities.**

Agreements CUB reached with three of the big five utilities led utilities to analyze energy burden data on a much more in-depth level than Wisconsin has seen before. And just this year, the **PSC responded to a request from CUB and went a step further, requiring all utilities to disclose energy burden data for each county where they operate.**

We need to build on these important steps. As CUB moves forward with an expanded team of utility experts, **we'll keep our eye on longstanding inequities and advocate for those hardest hit by the pandemic and the uneven economic recovery.**

One more thing: The CUB expansion will boost access for you to the inner workings of CUB. **Starting in August, CUB board meetings will be open to all CUB members and the public.** Look for details in mid-July on the CUB blog and the "events" page of CUB's website, cubwi.org.

Thank you for your continued support,

*Eileen Hannigan*

Eileen Hannigan on behalf of the CUB Board of Directors

# COVID-19, ENERGY BURDEN, EQUITY

The severity of the COVID-19 pandemic crystallized the need to keep an eye on the ball when it comes to essential life-sustaining services.

Here's how CUB responded, while shifting our own work to remote/work-from-home environment:

**Protecting access to service and delaying disconnections:** CUB advocated to extend the moratorium against shutting off customers' access to life-sustaining sources of energy and water.


**Resources for customers in need:** CUB published a [COVID-19 Resources page](#) on its website about the pandemic, extending the disconnection moratorium, and information about federal funds available to help customers behind on their bills.

**Communications:** We [spread the word](#) about the importance of preserving health and safety during media interviews, blogs, social media.



# Energy Management





On the issue of poverty, household energy burden and equity, CUB stepped forward. CUB has been advocating for utilities to do more analysis of the energy cost challenge faced by customers in dire straits.

**Energy burden advocacy:** In settlements reached in 2019 and 2020 We Energies, Wisconsin Public Service and Madison Gas and Electric agreed to analyze their customers' energy burden on a more detailed basis.

**More advocacy:** We convinced the Public Service Commission to mandate that [all utilities disclose their customers' energy burden](#) on a regular basis.

**Insight:** CUB staff learned about best practices in low income policy in the utility sector by getting together with the other CUBs, the National Consumer Law Center and the National Association of State Utility Consumer Advocates.

**Collaboration:** CUB worked directly with Alliant Energy as it developed a forgiveness program which helps its struggling customers who are behind on their bills. The forgiveness program was approved in December 2020 and launched earlier this year. More collaboration led to new forgiveness programs for customers of We Energies and Wisconsin Public Service in 2021.

CUB participated in the low income and equity stakeholders group as part of its work on an advisory committee for work by the state Office of Sustainability and Clean Energy to develop a clean energy plan for Wisconsin.

Looking forward, we are keeping our focus squarely on enabling a cost-effective clean energy transition for Wisconsin. After all, the poor and others who face systemic social challenges will bear the brunt of the cost of the energy system as it's been constructed to date. And they will continue to face inequities unless we have everyone at the table, working together and focused on an energy path forward that benefits everyone.

# An Affordable Clean Energy Transition

The energy world is changing dramatically – and swiftly. As utilities and the public embrace cleaner sources of power and lower emissions, more change is happening in this decade than in the past century!

## What's CUB's vision for a clean energy future?

- A future more **affordable, accessible, and cost-effective.**
- A future giving **customers tools to save, technology to help save, and more control over the energy they use and produce.**
- A future where **customers aren't pawns in a system designed by big utilities primarily to profit their own shareholders and themselves.**

CUB is actively working on advancing forward-thinking policies and ideas, whether through direct talks with utilities, collaboration in industry forums, and comments we file in cases at the Public Service Commission.

Keeping costs down is paramount, and helping Wisconsin regain the competitive edge on energy costs remains a goal.

We've demanded that customers shouldn't be left holding the bag as utilities try to reap high profits when coal plants are mothballed during the big transition.

That's why we urge that **more attention be placed on energy efficiency and demand response (shifting electric usage during peak periods).** Using less energy is the cheapest way to reduce carbon emissions, and it's the only way that will truly bring our costs down!



We don't say no to everything the utilities propose. But we do demand their plans are well thought out. As an example, we opposed an electric vehicle subsidy proposal that We Energies and Wisconsin Public Service came up with two years ago, but we endorsed their latest proposal for EV pilots, which just won approval from the PSC.

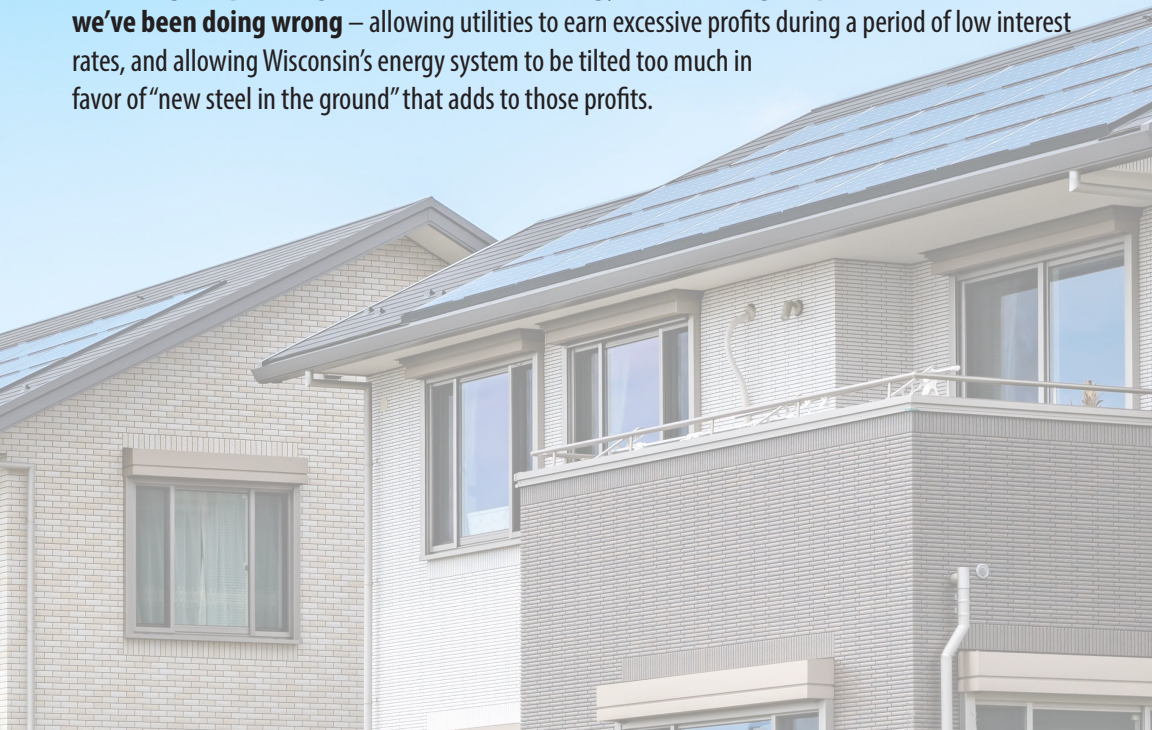
**As future clean energy planning occurs, it is an imperative that CUB is at the table representing customers voices in this transition.**

When you're driving, a GPS app will give you not one but two or three routes to get to where you're going. Why shouldn't we have that for something as important as our clean energy future?

Right now, the only map is the one the big utilities are driving on. This is where **good planning on the part of the PSC** comes in!

That's why, above all, we want you to have a bigger voice in how the future unfolds. **To that end, we are urging the PSC to get more involved in reviewing utilities' plans to shape the state's path toward a zero-carbon future.** The PSC needs to require that utilities be more transparent and candid about what their future plans are.

**Without good planning, we're at risk of an energy future taking shape that continues what we've been doing wrong** – allowing utilities to earn excessive profits during a period of low interest rates, and allowing Wisconsin's energy system to be tilted too much in favor of “new steel in the ground” that adds to those profits.



# CUB 2020 IN REVIEW

## MG&E RATE CASE FOR 2021

CUB reached a one-year negotiated settlement with Madison Gas & Electric in a case that set rates for 2021.



### How MG&E customers benefit:

<b>TOTAL SAVINGS:</b>	<b>\$21.2 million</b>
<b>RATE STABILITY:</b>	<b>No increase in electricity costs for customers in 2021.</b>
<b>CUSTOMER CHARGE:</b>	<b>No increase in fixed customer charge in 2021.</b>
<b>PROFITS:</b>	<b>MG&amp;E maintains lowest profit level among major Wisconsin utilities.</b>
<b>ENERGY BURDEN:</b>	<b>MG&amp;E committed to work with CUB to assess the energy burden of those who struggle the most to pay energy bills. That could lead to new programs to assist the most vulnerable.</b>
<b>FUEL:</b>	<b>Customers gain if MG&amp;E collects too much in fuel costs, but currently MG&amp;E can retain 2% more than it budgets for fuel. In 2021, MG&amp;E would only retain 1% more.</b>
<b>EFFICIENCY PAYS:</b>	<b>MG&amp;E launched its “Bring Your Own Device” program to reward customers who save energy if they have a smart thermostat linked to their air conditioning system.</b>



**REASONABLE UTILITY RATES NEEDED:** CUB believes utility profits and high customer charges, along with overall rates, need to come down. We will continue to advocate for you year in and year out.

**What’s Next for MG&E Customers:** MG&E filed a proposal to increase rates in 2022, and CUB is active in that case. We’re focused on ensuring aid for low-income customers, bringing down high profits, giving relief to customers from a fixed charge that’s still too high, and turning energy burden data into innovative policy solutions.

**Learn more about CUB happenings in real time at [cubwi.org/blog/](https://cubwi.org/blog/)**

## ALLIANT / WIS. POWER & LIGHT RATE CASE FOR 2021

The PSC in August gave Alliant Energy the OK to keep electric and natural gas rates unchanged in 2021. The PSC made tweaks to ensure customers won’t face an unmanageable increase the next time Alliant asks to raise rates.





## How Alliant customers benefit:

TOTAL SAVINGS:	\$47 million
RATE STABILITY:	No increase for electric or natural gas customers in 2021.
CUSTOMER CHARGE:	No Increase in Fixed Customer Charge in 2021.
PROFIT LEVEL:	Unchanged for 2021.

**What's Next for Alliant Customers:** Alliant and CUB have reached a new settlement that was filed in May with the PSC. Rates would rise in 2022 but remain unchanged in 2023. How customers benefit: **Restructuring of Edgewater coal plant costs will save customers \$60 million over the next 10 years.** Alliant also agreed to collaborate on low income rate programs, and will keep in place its program that helps customers with unpaid bills in effect for two more years. The PSC will decide this case later this year.

## PLEASANT PRAIRIE REFINANCING – SECURITIZATION CASE

The shutdown of the **We Energies coal plant in Pleasant Prairie led CUB to sound the alarm about customers being left on the hook while utilities earn high profits on power plants that have already been shut down and are no longer needed to keep the lights on.** The Pleasant Prairie case in 2020 implemented We Energies' commitment to refinance a portion of these costs.



## How We Energies customers benefit:

TOTAL SAVINGS:	\$88.6 million.
REFINANCING:	Securitization works like a refinancing and shifts costs to a lower interest rate estimated to be below 3%.
SAVINGS:	Savings for We Energies customers are projected at \$6 million over the next 13 years.
LEGISLATION INTRODUCED:	The success of this proposal has led to proposals to revise Wisconsin law to allow for the entire plant balance to be securitized, or refinanced.



**NEED LAW CHANGED:** Unfortunately, only a portion of the plant's total cost could be refinanced because of a limitation in state law.

**What's next for We Energies customers:** An affiliate of We Energies sold the refinancing bonds on Wall Street and won a favorable interest rate of below 2%. That means the cost of this on We Energies bills is less than 50 cents a month.

## OTHER CASES WE WORKED ON IN 2020:

**SHAWANO UTILITY:** CUB advocated to ensure that residential and small business customers wouldn't be penalized by unfair rate discounts enjoyed by a large industrial company in the city.

**XCEL EV PILOTS:** CUB supported and sought additional conditions on Xcel Energy's proposal to launch an electric vehicle (EV) pilot program, including one that would enable Xcel to manage a customer's vehicle charging to ensure charging takes place when electricity prices are lowest.

**PSC STRATEGIC ENERGY ASSESSMENT:** CUB renews its call for greater transparency and disclosure by utilities about their future investment plans tied to the clean energy transition. **CUB also urges the commission to mandate that utilities make regular assessments of the household energy burden faced by their customers across their service territories.**

**STATEWIDE POLICY ON ELECTRIC VEHICLES:** CUB supports the commission's call for innovative pilots that allow for utilities to aid the deployment of electric vehicles, including those that would see utilities manage the charging of customers' vehicles.

**SOLAR AND OVERRUNS:** When utilities build generation projects, they typically are allowed an overrun allowance above the price estimate of the project. **CUB has been vigilant in opposing moves by utilities to keep this overrun cushion in place for solar projects built by third party developers — and not the utilities themselves.** The PSC agreed with CUB!



## A New Path Forward for CUB

CUB is on a new path forward in 2021.

**With 2021 Wisconsin Act 24**, we're taking the vision of Ralph Nader in a new direction.

In an era of divided government and fractured politics, **we've achieved a big win**. A win made possible because of the vision of CUB's founders, the loyalty of CUB's donors, the value of CUB's mission and efforts by the CUB team in recent years.

Above all, this is a win for millions of utility customers across the state!

### What's Changing?

Act 24 enables CUB to perform its role as Wisconsin's consumer advocate by giving the PSC permission to approve up to \$900,000 a year for CUB. This, in turn, **helps fund the advocacy work CUB does to represent you**, the small customer.

We're **going to deepen our expertise by adding in-house analysts to help advocate for you**. Now CUB will have its own four-person regulatory team diving in to find savings, spot trends and propose innovative solutions.

We will better represent you and your interests and make sure you have an even stronger voice in the years ahead.

**In-house CUB analysts focused on our key cases at the PSC will create other benefits as well:** Look for more outreach, more consumer education, and more chances for CUB to advocate for an energy future where utilities aren't just profiting from a green energy transition but are focused on giving consumers the tools they need to save.

Under the new system, utility customers from the major Wisconsin utilities will each contribute about a penny and a half a month to help fund our work, starting July 1st, 2021.

This small price provides a big step forward for Wisconsin in ensuring that our rates are fair.



## What This Means for You

Your membership/support still matters. Even with this more stable funding source, the utilities still bring far more resources and power to PSC proceedings than CUB. We're still David taking on Goliath. We're still outgunned.

So the reality is that while this is a big step forward, more steps are needed to make sure that you have a strong voice at the table.

## That's where you come in:

- **Your support helps build awareness of CUB** through more education and outreach.
- **Your support helps us in the policy arena** as we strive to make progress for low-income customers and look to bring costs down for all customers.
- **Your support strengthens the longtime viability of CUB**, should the political climate turn against us.
- **Your support – and your help spreading the word about our work** – will ensure that we are even more of a household name across Wisconsin, to give us the reach we need to truly exert more power and influence on your behalf.

In some ways, while it's the dawning of a new era for CUB, it's really an enhancement of what we've done year-in and year-out for 41 years. Although the mechanics and details of how we stand up for you are changing, the bottom line is that we're doing what CUB's always done – but with even better outcomes and solutions for you.

## What's not changing?

We'll never stop standing up and fighting for what's right and for what's fair for customers who can least afford utility excesses.

We've had your back for 41 years, and that's not changing. We'll still, and always, be at the table on your behalf – and standing up for you.

## Thank you for your continued support!





*"This law will ensure that CUB's funding will be more stable and sustainable, and will allow CUB to remain focused on its mission of advocating for Wisconsin families and small businesses who don't have an army of attorneys at their disposal."*

**– Governor Tony Evers**

*"We have to base our decisions on the evidence presented to us. This will make that information more robust and complete, and ensure the voice of customers is represented."*

**– Rebecca Cameron Valcq, Chairperson of the PSC**



*"Act 24 creates a stable and sustainable funding source for the Citizens Utility Board, allowing CUB to hire more in-house expertise to intervene in rate cases before the PSC. It is important to have a solvent Citizens Utility Board in Wisconsin to advocate for lower utility rates for residential and small businesses."*

**– Rep. Mike Kuglitsch, R-New Berlin, chair,  
Assembly Energy and Utilities Committee**

*"While other states use taxpayer money to fund similar programs, Wisconsin's model ensures the existence of an independent, non-profit advocate is able to work effectively with all stakeholders. This new law creates a mechanism for the individuals and small companies whom CUB represents to fund the organization's work directly."*

**– Sen. Julian Bradley, R-Franklin, chair,  
Senate Committee on Utilities,  
Technology and Telecommunications**



## It's Time to Vote for Members of the CUB Board of Directors.

Current CUB members in good standing (that is, those who have made a contribution to CUB of at least \$5 on or after January 1, 2020) are entitled to vote in this election.

**Please use the lilac ballot envelope enclosed with this annual report to cast your vote. Please mail your ballot by August 11, 2021.**

Here is information about the nominee for the CUB Board for a term running from July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2024:



### Heather Goetsch



Heather's professional background includes a series of roles with increasing responsibility at the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC), based in Washington, D.C. She is currently associate director at the USGBC working remotely from Milwaukee. She has led volunteers and staff at the local, state, regional and national levels, and has managed and directed work plans and budget ranging from \$100,000 to \$1.5 million. She also has experience directing events. She recently started a path to reinvigorate the individual membership program at USGBC, with a goal of growing it to a \$1 million revenue stream. Her volunteer work includes service on the American Planning Association's volunteer committee, and she serves on her village's Architectural Review Board.

Heather's reason for wanting to serve on the CUB board of directors is because consumer protection is critical around utility service, and CUB is working at the intersection of equity and environmental protection for utility service. CUB improves the quality of life for the residents of Wisconsin, along with the other CUBs across the country. Heather wants to bring her experience to help improve and increase CUB's capacity for outreach and engagement over the next three years to raise the organization's profile, and to boost its efforts and its statewide recognition as an advocate, as a collaborator and as an educator helping Wisconsinites. "CUB should be a 'household name' for the residents and businesses it serves," she says.

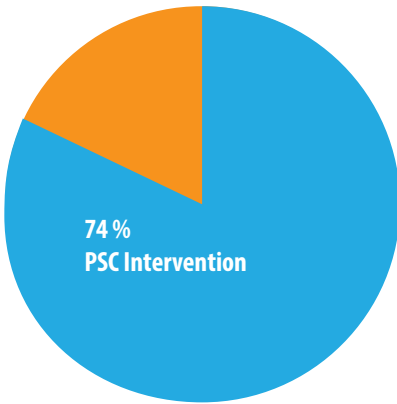
The following members of the board were elected in 2020 to three-year term expiring June 30, 2023:

- Eileen Hannigan, Madison
- John Hendrick, Madison
- Joel Dresang, Shorewood
- Carol Stemrich, Verona
- Andrew Hartinger, Wauwatosa

## 2020 Financials

**Income: \$460,914**

26 %  
**Membership/Contributions**



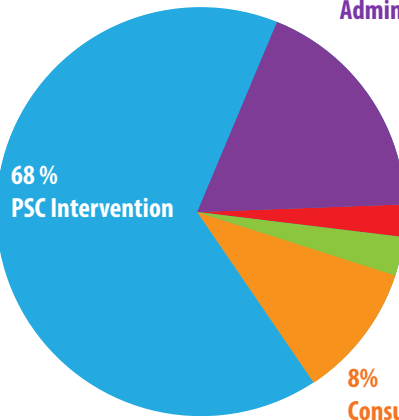
**Expenses: \$377,188**

21%  
**Admin/Fundraising**

2%  
**Lobbying**

2%  
**Energy Policy**

8%  
**Consumer Education**



CUB would like to thank the following for their support in 2020:

- Public Service Commission of Wisconsin
- Community Shares of Wisconsin

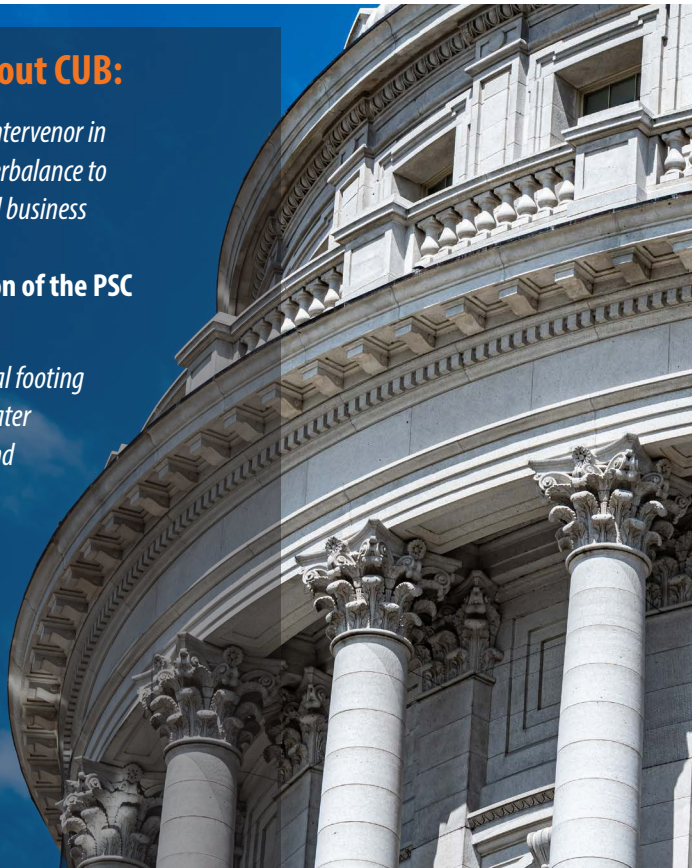
## What Officials are saying about CUB:

*“Without CUB’s active participation as an intervenor in PSC cases, there would be a lack of a counterbalance to the utilities—leaving residential and small business consumers without an equal advocate.”*

– **Rebecca Cameron Valcq, Chairperson of the PSC**

*“Giving CUB the means to have a more equal footing in proceedings before the PSC results in greater representation for Wisconsin consumers, and ultimately leads to lower utility bills.”*

– **Governor Tony Evers**



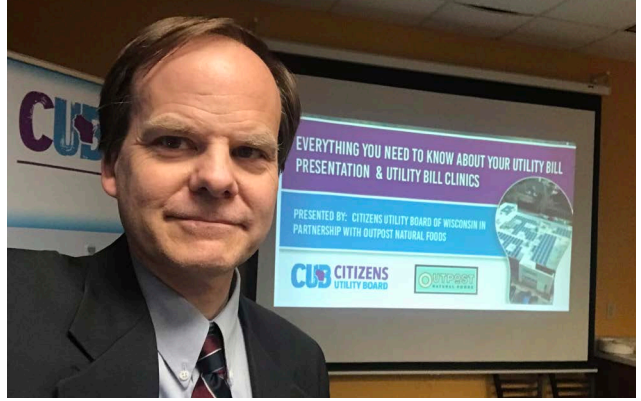
## CUB Working with Small Business

**Highlights of what we've been working on for you.**

**Advocacy:** CUB assists Small Business members with questions about their utility bills and services, and is their voice at the PSC. CUB worked with small business advocacy groups to encourage lawmakers to support legislation that will modernize CUB's work.

**Engagement/Education:** CUB provided business and community groups with virtual presentations on how to save on energy bills and its policy positions for an affordable clean energy transition. With Wisconsin re-emerging from the pandemic, CUB plans more engagement efforts with small businesses later this year. Watch for updates on CUB's LinkedIn page and the CUB blog at [cubwi.org](http://cubwi.org).

**Community Outreach:** CUB is available to speak to chambers, civic clubs and businesses about saving on energy costs, steps toward a consumer-centric energy future and other topics. Contact Tom Content at [content@cubwi.org](mailto:content@cubwi.org).



### CUB is here for our Small Business Members:

Small Business member Bounce Milwaukee had an unfortunate experience with its utility bill when the pandemic and #SaferAtHome prompted the business to temporarily close. Ryan and Becky Clancy of Bounce noticed that they were sent an "estimated bill" because the utility's system couldn't understand why the business was using so little energy. We didn't think it would be fair for a business forced to shut down to be billed for energy it wasn't even using! After multiple calls by Bounce to the utility and PSC and by CUB to the utility, We Energies committed to turn off software programs that automatically send out these estimated bills, for the duration of the health emergency. That was a good move, and Ryan told us he's pleased other customers didn't have to take the extra steps he did to make this right.

### Time to Renew or Join:

If you're a small business member, consider renewing your membership in the enclosed envelope, and please share a copy of our report with like-minded businesses or your local chamber.

Not a small business member yet?

Head to [cubwi.org/give](http://cubwi.org/give) and sign up.





## Volunteer Opportunity: Consider Service on the CUB Board of Directors

The CUB board of directors is seeking nominations for new members as CUB considers expanding the size of the current board. Nominees should share CUB's commitment that ratepayers deserve fairness in and a strong voice to ensure safe, reliable utility service at reasonable rates. Nominees must be current CUB members. In particular, CUB is seeking nominees with skills or background in: Fundraising/ Development, Human Resources, Marketing/Engagement/Outreach, Nonprofit Governance/Management, Strategic Planning, Equity/ Inclusion Advocacy, Energy Policy

If you're interested in serving a 3-year term on the CUB board of directors - please contact Executive Director Tom Content by Sept. 1, 2021 at [content@cubwi.org](mailto:content@cubwi.org).

## CUB and Community Shares, Working Together



CUB is a proud member of **Community Shares of Wisconsin**. This year **Community Shares of Wisconsin** marks its 50th anniversary supporting 70 nonprofit member organizations that work to advance social justice and lead efforts throughout Wisconsin to protect our civil rights as well as build a safe and sustainable future where everyone is safe, healthy, and able to thrive.

Using a grassroots approach, Community Shares of Wisconsin is building the social justice movement where charitable giving isn't just for the wealthy. By connecting with as many individual donors as possible, philanthropy can be democratized where everyone's contributions add up to make a big difference. In this year's record-breaking **The Big Share**® fundraising campaign \$724,659 was raised from 5,000 donors.

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Connect with CUB – [CUBWI.ORG](http://CUBWI.ORG)

## What's Your Legacy?

### How About Helping Ensure a Sustainable CUB?

Interested in helping CUB well into the future? Please consider making a planned gift to Citizens Utility Board of Wisconsin. It's another way to support CUB in addition to a donation. By including CUB in your legacy, giving your gift will last for generations, ensuring an independent voice for Wisconsin utility customers well into the future.

**We recommend you consult with your attorney or tax advisor about the various tax benefits and restrictions that may apply to your specific situation. You and your advisors are welcome to contact Richard Storck at CUB at 608-957-8911.**

