

Petition for Electronic Filing, Distribution and Retrieval to Increase Public Understanding and Participation in State Regulatory Proceedings

To: MN Department of Commerce and MN Public Utilities Commission

WHEREAS, the Minnesota Department of Commerce (DOC) and the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (PUC) make decisions that significantly affect the quality and structure of our energy, communication, transportation and financial systems;

WHEREAS, state policy is to maximize the ability of households and businesses to participate in decisions affecting their livelihoods and quality of life;

WHEREAS, the current paper-based public comment systems used by the DOC and the PUC are outdated, very labor intensive and costly, especially for individuals and small organizations;

WHEREAS, the postage, copying, mailing and distribution-related costs to the public for active energy and telecommunications related dockets could well be in excess of \$500,000 per year;

WHEREAS, technology adopted by the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board allows citizens to comment and retrieve information on proceedings before the EQB directly from the EQB web site;

WHEREAS, the technology exists and is used in other parts of the country to allow for electronic retrieval and filing of documents;

WHEREAS, a survey conducted by the PUC found broad support for an electronic filing and retrieval system;

WHEREAS, the state of Wisconsin's Public Service Commission will, as of January 1, 2005, fully offer its citizens the option of electronic filing for all proceedings;

WHEREAS, the State of North Dakota's Public Service Commission already allows comments on matters before the Commission to be submitted electronically;

WHEREAS, the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission and the Minnesota Department of Commerce have for many years declared their intent to establish an electronic filing system "soon";

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the groups listed below and on behalf of their respective citizen members (if applicable) formally request the following actions:

1. By the end of January 2005, the DOC and PUC implement procedures for receiving comments and filings in electronic formats.

2. By the end of January 2005, the DOC and PUC implement physical changes on their web site to accommodate electronic filing and distribution of comments on proceedings in electronic formats.
3. By the end of January 2005, the PUC establish on its web site an archive for each docket. At a minimum, the archive should contain electronic copies of the case control file sheet, service list, timelines, filings by parties, information requests, comments, orders, staff briefing papers and other relevant information.

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