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Westar Standing by Rate Increase Request

WICHITA, Kan. (AP) - Officials from the largest electric utility in Kansas are vowing to press on with its request for \$31.7 million in rate hikes for some customers across the state, including plans to modify rates for low-income customers.

Westar Energy Inc. is asking the Kansas Corporation to approve the request, which would shift the burden of rates away from larger, industrial customers. The Wichita Eagle reports that critics of Westar's request say the new proposals for low-income and new startup businesses would expand what is supposed to be a narrowly focused rate request.

Westar is seeking the rate increase to pay for \$1.2 billion in upgrades to satisfy Environmental Protection Agency regulations. Westar serves nearly 700,000 customers in eastern and central Kansas.

Associated Press