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Nebraska Rural Electric Association

Keeping electricity rates low has always been a priority of public power in Nebraska. Low monthly bills make it easier for our consumers to keep a little more in their pockets – especially prices going through the roof on so many things these days. Electric cooperatives and public power districts are seeing their costs rise as well, in part due to rising costs of fuel used to generate electricity, including coal, which must be shipped via rail from coal-producing regions to our power plants. Unfortunately, railroads are unnecessarily raising their shipping rates. Without any rail competition, Nebraska's electric generators have no choice but to pay the increased fees. These costs are not justified -- the railroads are simply taking advantage of the fact that there is no competition in the coal shipping business and Nebraska's not-for-profit public power providers have no choice in who will deliver coal to Nebraska's power plants. Just last month the U.S. Supreme Court upheld a ruling forcing Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad to refund \$345 million to two of its electric rail shippers and lower its "unlawfully high" rates approximately 60 percent. This case spotlighted the abusive monopolistic powers of the rail industry and some in Congress feel it's time for a thorough review of the railroads' abusive practices and exemptions from antitrust laws. The anti-competitive practices the railroads have had in place for decades only serve to increase shipping rates and gouge the end customers. It is time for the STB to step in and fix the lack of competition in the rail industry – which will help keep everyone's electric bill lower.

Sincerely,
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JUN 14 2011

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Public Record