

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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For further information, contact:
Colleen Wasinger (314) 2495863

**WASINGER CALLS FOR PROACTIVE, STRATEGIC COUNTY REVIEW
OF UTILITY SERVICE
TO REDUCE STORM VULNERABILITY; PRAISES COUNTY, AMEREN
EMERGENCY RESPONSE TO RECENT EVENTS**

Opposes Rate Hike Request Until Progress in Made on Outage Mitigation Plan

Town & Country Alderman Colleen Wasinger urged the St. Louis County Council to begin an independent review of possible solutions to reduce the vulnerability of neighborhoods and businesses throughout the County from severe power outages as has occurred in the past week.

“The emergency response of St. Louis County personnel, emergency workers and Ameren crews has been tremendous in light of the damage,” Wasinger said. “I have nothing but praise for their reaction after the storm. But, the County needs to be proactive, ask the right questions and look into opportunities like reducing the number of above ground power lines so we can lessen the impact of strong wind-related storms and a substantial commitment to tree trimming in the interim.”

Wasinger, a Republican candidate for the Third Council District, said the County should not support Ameren’s current request for an average 17.7 percent rate hike, now before the Missouri Public Service Commission, until the utility agrees to proactively address power outage issues and commits to a plan to harden the power system. Council Chairman Kurt Odenwald, R-Shrewsbury, referred the utility’s request for County support of the rate hike to a committee of the entire Council on Tuesday. Odenwald said he supports Wasinger’s call for a proactive review.

“The recent severe storm is not the only time we have had widespread power outages in St. Louis County in recent years,” she said. “It has happened many times in all areas of the County and it’s time we are proactive instead of reactive. We can’t change the weather, but we can plan for mitigating its impact.”

(more)

Wasinger said a Council review should not be convened “to point fingers,” but should aim to look at all potential ways to protect the integrity of the power system. She encouraged the Council to bring in independent, outside experts to offer insights, and review existing and planned utility programs to safeguard power lines. She said she hoped Ameren and other area utilities would work cooperatively with the Council on the review and not perceive it as a threat.

“I believe it’s fair to ask, ‘Can the County be better prepared **before** the damage occurs?’” she said. “We must strategically prepare to better protect residents’ homes and businesses and reduce the waste and cost brought on by frequent power failures.”

Wasinger, Chairman of the Public Works Commission in Town & Country, is an attorney and MBA.

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