

fact, the matter before the body, in this case, NPPD, affected a resident in a different county that didn't have access to that notice was unreasonable. But what we are about to do if you adopt this bill, if you pass this legislation, is put into statute this very practice, that this language in LB 628 would not allow not only NPPD but other public entities in this state the right to publish a notice in their local home-based newspaper and count that as adequate notice when, in fact, the decisions they are about to make affect people that have no idea that there was about to be a decision made or a hearing held. The open meetings law in this fashion is being flaunted and ignored by this practice. Now there is no doubt in my mind as to the injustice perpetrated by NPPD and the court did act and decide against them, but what we are trying to do here is far, far worse than what NPPD did because it affects more than NPPD. It affects all these entities that are under the open meetings law and I, for one, do not feel that this standard of open meetings access and notice is, in fact, reasonable, and I would argue that we should kill the bill and allow us to proceed with the idea that better notice is required than this bill would provide for. Now to give you an example on rate matters and the difference of opinion of how these are handled, the LES board has adopted a policy that says the following: Ratepayers will be notified via their electric bill that a change in electric rates has been proposed. And the date and place of the board meeting, hearing will be included, and an idea of what the rate increase will amount to, so that the public, the people, have a chance to know when they are about to face a rate increase and have a chance to respond. It is public power and our state is the only public power entity in the country, the only state fully under public power, and the public does have an ownership in our public power system. But if they aren't informed of rate setting decisions, they can't act and represent themselves. But LES has responded, I think, in a constructive fashion. What does NPPD have to say? In their policy, they say mandatory requirements for transmitting information to each customer would result in little if any additional benefits while creating considerable additional cost. What this says is it isn't going to help anything to let customers know that there is a rate increase, there is little if any additional benefit, and the cost does not justify doing that. Well, I think they are plumb wrong. When they send out mailings and they send out billings, it ought to be part of that process to let those ratepayers know as an insert, perhaps, in their billing that they are about to have a rate increase. That is not too much to ask. It is the