

**Energy Rates Working Group**

**Minutes**

September 10, 2003

**Attendance:**

Ruby Hargrave, Dennis Doi, Kris Foster, Charles Totto, David Waller, Patty Williams, Eileen Yoshinaka, Sharon Miyashiro, Regina Gregory

Sharon Miyashiro mentioned that the working groups will report to the Energy Forum at a meeting in mid-October.

Dave Waller presented data on the number of HECO customers whose income falls below 150% of the poverty guideline (the LIHEAP criterion). It amounts to about 21%. About 10% of customers are delinquent on their bills at any given time, but often it is for reasons other than lack of money (e.g., being on vacation). Bills that are written off as bad debt amount to only 0.1%.

Kris Foster mentioned that often people are sacrificing something else to pay for their electric bills. She offered to get census data on incomes.

There was some discussion about alternatives such as lowering residential rates (which are higher than commercial/industrial), lifeline rates, increasing block rates, and utility deposits. Dave Waller agreed to find out more about how deposits are calculated.

It would be good if we could match DHS data with HECO data to see, e.g., how many utility shut-offs or delinquent accounts are welfare recipients. But it may be that privacy laws prevent us from sharing this information.

It was suggested that we could try to assess how much more money would be necessary to help low-income people if electric rates go up. Kris Foster agreed to

## Hawaii Energy Policy Forum

research this. Dave Waller agreed to further examine the delinquency data and perhaps extrapolate future delinquency with increased electric rates.

Eileen Yoshinaka mentioned that education is also important—there are no-cost or low-cost things people can do to lower their electric bills.

Chuck Totto agreed to look into what is being done in other states.

Eileen Yoshinaka mentioned there are over 300 federal low-income programs, including rural renewable energy and efficiency. There is possible grant money. Dave Waller mentioned HECO rebates can be used for partial matching funds for grants.

It was suggested we might also want to lobby for a change in the federal formula which relies on heating days.

The next meeting will be on Thursday, October 2, 12:00 to 1:30 at the HCAP conference room.