



## PRESS RELEASE

Date: April 4, 2022

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### Natural Gas Customers Impacted From Supplier Bankruptcy

<West-Central Ohio – April 4, 2022> Residents of Sidney, Greenville, Bellefontaine, Bradford, Fort Loramie, Russia, Ansonia, Covington, West Milton and Jeffersonville will begin receiving notice from CenterPoint Energy Ohio (formerly Vectren Energy Delivery of Ohio) of a change to their community's natural gas aggregation supplier, Volunteer Energy Services, Inc. On March 25, 2022, Volunteer Energy filed for bankruptcy which has prompted a flurry of quick actions by the courts affecting the customers served by Volunteer Energy, including those in their 139 government aggregation programs across Ohio.

Notice was posted on the Public Utility Commission of Ohio's website that Volunteer Energy customers would be dropped back to the utility's Standard Choice Offering (SCO) rate for natural gas. Through this past winter, the SCO rate has averaged \$0.712 cents per one hundred cubic feet (Ccf) of natural gas dating back to October 2021 through February of this year. The Volunteer Energy rate negotiated for these communities was fixed at \$0.429 per Ccf and was slated to run through April 2023. For the 11,308 households previously served by Volunteer Energy through these communities' natural gas aggregation programs, the savings over the past year have amount to nearly \$125,000 collectively.

Affordable Gas + Electric (AGE), who represents these communities as the energy consultant for the community aggregation program, says that residents will receive official notice from CenterPoint Energy Ohio via US mail of their accounts being returned to the utility's SCO program and there is no action that has to be taken at this time.

"With these filings, a flood of robo-telemarketing calls have been pounding our communities with a message that they need to make a choice of a new supplier. While this is ultimately true, making a choice over the phone may lead to some very bad outcomes," said Jeff Haarmann, Managing Partner of AGE. "Nobody affiliated with your community's aggregation program will contact you via phone. These are predatory companies trying to take advantage of the Volunteer bankruptcy filing. It is a buyer beware scenario at this point."

AGE intends to re-bid the community aggregation programs to insure the most competitive rate can be secured. If residents do nothing at this point, they will be dropped back to the utility's SCO service whereby they will be assigned to a retail natural gas supplier under the rules of that program. Later this summer, AGE anticipates finalizing a new contract with the most favorable rate possible. Residents still on the utility's SCO service will automatically be included in the new aggregation rate via the standard opt-out process.

"The natural gas market right now is very volatile. We feel like waiting until summer when natural gas prices may settle back down a little, will be the best time to secure a new rate moving forward. Residents of our communities should know that we will insure they have lowest competitive rate possible prior to next winter's heating season" added Haarmann. "For now, we recommend residents do nothing, allow themselves to drop back to the SCO service and they will automatically be included in the new natural gas aggregation rates when they become available. At that point, residents will have complete control over whether they choose to continue with the community's aggregation rate or seek another rate through individual shopping practices."