

What to do with vacuum created by loss in life



Your Turn
Connie Mason Michaelis
Guest columnist

Throughout our lives, we endure numerous losses. Each time a loss occurs a vacuum is created. It’s as if a puzzle piece is missing, leaving the picture incomplete.

It may actually cause us physical pain because it creates an empty space in our hearts. Losses create vacuums, holes, chasms, and gulfs, and there is a need to repair the empty place.

As we age, we experience it more frequently. Perhaps it’s a lost job or becoming an empty nester. Vacuums are created when we move to a different

town and start anew, making new friends and trying to feel comfortable once again. Everything echoes with loneliness, even the home we live in.

Sooner or later, we all face the loss of loved ones, including friends and family. For those who are widowed, there is a profound sense of loss. It feels as though the vacuum could suck us into a black hole.

Our response could be anger, frustration, depression or plain exhaustion, and all these responses are legitimate. But if we change the paradigm slightly, it might be a ray of light. If you consider your situation as a vacuum, you realize that it can’t be filled again with whatever the loss was originally.

But it can be filled with something else that might ease your pain.

It’s possible to be proactive in finding

that thing that fills the hole. If your mind is open and you approach with a positive attitude, you can seek out an activity or meaning that brings fullness back, not in the same way, but something that fills the space left by loss. Yes, it takes time and patience.

We can stay in our first response as long as we want. But sooner or later, it is up to us to move forward to regain equilibrium and fullness. No one can do it for you. It is personal growth and an inside job.

There is no reason to ask God, “Why did this happen to me?” That question has been asked for eternity, and the answer is silence. It becomes our responsibility to find the answer.

I heard a gentleman recently say: “Don’t seek happiness for yourself because when you find it, it is fleeting. But

if you seek happiness for someone else, you make a difference and catch the overflow for your own life.”

The vacuum creates a need for transition. We must view it as a gap in life that demands our full attention.

As Father Richard Rohr says: “We can’t go around, over, or under the pain. We must walk through it to see what is next.”

Perhaps we could think of it as an opportunity to enlarge our experience and compassion for others.

I love this meme that popped up: “Never regret a day in your life. Good days give happiness, bad days give experience, worst days give lessons, and best days give memories.”

Find Connie’s books "Daily Cures: Wisdom for Healthy Aging" and "The Way Grandmothers Are" at www.justnowoldenough.com.

Evergy

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kilowatt-hours per month — would see a \$13.05, or 10% increase, in their monthly bill.

How much would my Evergy electric bill increase?

Of the \$196 million net increase — which is about a 9% net increase in total retail revenues — \$192 million would be from actual base rate changes, according to Evergy’s application filed with the KCC in January.

That \$192 million increase in yearly retail revenues — from \$1.41 billion to \$1.60 billion — is about a 14% increase. But some classes have different percentage increases, according to a retail revenue summary for Evergy Kansas Central.

The main residential service class would pay about 15% more under Evergy’s proposal, according to the company’s application documents. Those roughly 630,000 residential customers would collectively pay about \$96 million more a year.

For an average customer using 853 kWh per month, that’s a monthly increase of \$12.65, from \$84.58 to \$97.23.

Most small businesses fall under the small general service class. Those approximately 89,000 customers would pay about 13% more, for an average of \$34.49 more per month and a collective increase of about \$37 million.

The large tire manufacturer class would pay about 12% more. There is only one customer in that class, and its electricity costs would rise from \$4.8 million per year to \$5.4 million. That’s about \$48,000 a month.

Churches in the restricted institutions class, which has about 300 customers, would see their average monthly bill’s rate increase by about \$48.49, or 15%. Schools in the educational service class, which has about 1,500 customers, would see an average monthly increase of about \$307.90, or 15%.

Evergy has a handful of other classes also outlined in application documents.

Why does Evergy need more money?

Evergy wants more money despite posting substantial profits last year, corporate documents show.

In 2024, Evergy recorded about \$878

million in adjusted earnings. That was up from about \$816 million in 2023. Stockholders were paid \$597 million in cash dividends in 2024.

To start 2025, the company had about \$125 million in adjusted earnings during the first three months of the year.

“Evergy’s Application requests updated prices to include nearly \$1 billion investment in infrastructure that serves customers, adjustments for overall cost of capital and increased operating expenses,” the company said in a bill insert notification sent to electric customers.

In the application, Evergy said, “The proposed revenues are just and reasonable and necessary to ensure continuing, adequate, and efficient utility service and to maintain EKC’s financial integrity.” The requested net increase of \$196 million includes the following:

- “A \$91 million increase attributable to new infrastructure investment in EKC’s system.”
- “Adjustments for overall cost of capital of \$18 million.”
- “Expense true-up of \$43 million.”
- “Other adjustments constituting \$44 million of the increase.”

“Combined,” Evergy’s application said, “the rate adjustments represent fair and reasonable amounts necessary to maintain a financially healthy Kansas utility that will be well-positioned to continue the investments necessary to maintain reliability for EKC’s existing customers and advance the investments necessary to support the current historic economic development opportunity in Kansas by providing cost-effective and ample access to capital required for the needed investments.”

Didn’t Evergy just raise rates recently?

Evergy last increased its rates in December 2023, when a KCC settlement approved an increase in the central territory coupled with a decrease in the metro territory. The Evergy Kansas Central rate hike approved by regulators was less than the company wanted, and the CEO told investors the company would file a new rate case in about two years.

The corporation annual report to stockholders showed the rate changes approved in 2023 benefited the company’s finances in 2024. The corporation’s \$286 million increase in utility gross margin in 2024 was due in-part to a \$142 million increase from Evergy Kansas Central ratepayers.

Who makes the final decision and when?

The Kansas Corporation Commission, with input from staff and involved parties, will make the final decision on the proposed rate increases through docket No. 25-EKCE-294-RTS. The commission was created by state law, and one of its roles is to regulate rates for public utilities.

The three members of the unelected commission are appointed by the governor and confirmed by the Senate. Their names are Andrew French, Dwight Keen and Annie Kuether.

The commission has a five-day evidentiary hearing scheduled to start July 21, but that could be affected if Evergy, KCC staff and other parties propose a settlement agreement beforehand.

Other parties include various intervenors, from large businesses and industry groups, like Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company and the Kansas Industrial Consumers Group, to other energy companies like Kansas Gas Service, plus school districts and the U.S. Department of Defense. Also intervening is the Citizens’ Utility Ratepayer Board, or CURB, which is tasked by state law with representing residential and small commercial ratepayers.

A KCC order potentially setting new rates is due by Sept. 29.

How can I speak out about higher electric bills?

The KCC is holding two public hearings.

The first is at 6 p.m. June 11 in Wichita, at Wichita State University’s Lowe Auditorium in the Hughes Metropolitan Complex, 5014 E. 29th St. North.

The second is at 6 p.m. June 16 in Topeka, at the Washburn Institute of Technology, 5724 SW Huntoon St.

In addition to in-person attendance, the public may participate virtually via Zoom, but must register online by noon the day before each hearing. The hearings will also be livestreamed and recorded on the KCC YouTube channel.

The commission is also accepting public comment, with a deadline of 5 p.m. July 14.

Written public comment may be submitted online through the KCC website. A letter referencing the docket number can be mailed to the KCC Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Protection, 1500 SW Arrowhead, Topeka, KS 66604. Comments can also be made over the phone by calling the KCC at 800-662-

Evergy

Evergy is proposing a \$196 million annual rate increase for Evergy Kansas Central customers. Evergy Kansas Metro customers wouldn’t be affected. The Evergy Kansas Central service territory covers about 735,000 customers in central and eastern Kansas. It is headquartered in Topeka and spans from Leavenworth to Salina and Hutchinson to Pittsburg.

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Rate case is separate from cases on new power plants and transmission delivery charge

Evergy has a separate case before the KCC for predetermination on ratemaking principles related to new power generation facilities. That case was filed in November and a KCC decision is due by July 7 on a proposed settlement agreement.

While rates would not change immediately, the proposed settlement would likely lead to higher electric rates for customers in the future to pay off Evergy’s investments in two new natural gas plants and a solar farm. The trio of plants are estimated to increase rates by a combined 9.3%.

Earlier this year, Evergy Kansas Central had a separate KCC case increasing its transmission delivery charge tariff by 2.42%, effective May 1.

Due to actions by the Legislature, the KCC did not have discretion over the matter and was required to treat it as prudent and “necessary to compensate Evergy Central for the transmission expense incurred by the utility to supply retail energy to its customers.”

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Justice

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don’t like,” she wrote, “the Government can approach the courtroom bar with nothing more than that and obtain relief from this Court nevertheless.”

In a brief and unsigned decision, the majority said it weighed the “irreparable harm” factor along with the other required considerations of what’s in the public interest and whether the courts are likely to ultimately decide that DOGE can access

the data.

But the majority did not explain how they did so.

Jackson raised a similar complaint when the court on May 30 said the administration can revoke the temporary legal status of hundreds of thousands of Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans and Venezuelans living in the United States.

She wrote that the court “plainly botched” its assessment of whether the government or the approximately 530,000 migrants would suffer the greater harm if their legal status ends while the administration’s mass ter-

mination of that status is being litigated.

Jackson said the majority undervalued “the devastating consequences of allowing the Government to precipitously upend the lives and livelihoods of nearly half a million noncitizens while their legal claims are pending.”

The majority did not offer an explanation for its decision.

In addition to those interventions, the Supreme Court recently blocked a judge’s order requiring DOGE to disclose information about its operations, declined to reinstate independent agency board members fired by Trump, allowed

Trump to strip legal protections from 350,000 Venezuelans, and said the president can enforce his ban on transgender people serving in the military.

Jackson disagreed with all of those decisions. The court’s two other liberal justices – Sotomayor and Elena Kagan – disagreed with most of them.

The court did hand Trump a setback in May when it barred the administration from quickly resuming deportations of Venezuelans under a 1798 wartime law.

Two of the court’s six conservative justices – Clarence Thomas and Samuel Alito – dissented.

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