

MAY 2020
PUBLIC POLICY REPORT

FEDERAL UPDATE

U.S. unemployment rises significantly in April

The unemployment rate shot up to 14.7 percent in April, its highest level since the Great Depression, as reported by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. U.S. employers shed 20.5 million jobs during the month. The high, but expected jobless rate indicates the economy has likely entered a downturn that will eclipse the Great Recession of 2007-2009.

DC Circuit Court grills NARUC, FERC on Order 841

A three-judge panel on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit pressed counsel on whether or not a landmark federal storage order was encroaching on state authority over the distribution system. Order 841, issued by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission in 2018, was intended to expand the ability of storage to participate in wholesale power markets. But critics of the order are stuck on one aspect of the rule which attempts to curtail state authority over the distribution system. The language in question says that states may not "broadly prohibit" resources from participating in federally regulated wholesale markets. FERC and clean energy groups argue the rule does not inhibit states' ability to regulate their distribution systems, but rather ensures energy storage resources aren't prevented from participating in the market.

STATE UPDATE

Upper Midwest electric co-ops urge members of Congress to provide economic relief for rural America

More than 30 electric co-ops, including the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives from across the Upper Midwest signed on to a letter urging members of Congress to provide economic relief for rural America. Senators Grassley and Ernst, along with Representatives King, Axne, Finkenauer and Loebsack received the letter. Specifically, the letter calls for Congress to support additional stimulus package relief for food and ethanol processing plants, and the farmers and ranchers who serve them—most of whom are also electric cooperative members.

President Trump and Governor Reynolds discuss food supply resilience

Gov. Kim Reynolds met with President Donald Trump, Vice President Mike Pence and U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue in Washington on Wednesday to discuss the state's response to coronavirus, outbreaks at meatpacking plants and the virus's effects on the food supply. While the officials at the White House meeting acknowledged the coronavirus interrupted normal supply chains, Perdue predicted the food supply would be back at full capacity within 10 days.

Alliant Energy projects no loss in profit due to COVID-19

Alliant Energy says the COVID-19 pandemic will likely cause a 5% decline in sales but should not affect shareholder profits this year. Alliant announced first-quarter profits of 70 cents per share Friday, up from 53 cents in the same

period last year. The company attributed gains to growing ratepayer-backed investments by its Wisconsin and Iowa utilities, offset by lower sales attributed to mild weather. Alliant said quarterly earnings were not significantly affected by COVID-19. Looking forward, Alliant expects the health crisis to result in lower commercial and industrial sales, offset by an increase in residential sales, as well as pandemic-related expenses such as protective equipment for employees and unpaid bills.

Consumer Price Index

Month	Seasonally Adjusted Change from Previous Month
April 2020	-0.8%
March 2020	-0.4%
February 2020	0.1%
January 2020	0.1%
December 2019	0.2%
November 2019	0.3%
Unadjusted Rolling 12 Month Average: 0.3%	