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- Joint Committee on the Redevelopment of Abandoned and Foreclosed Homes
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- Zoning, Neighborhoods & Development Committee
- Historic Preservation Commission
- Housing Trust Fund Advisory Board

ROBERT J. BAUMAN
ALDERMAN, 4TH DISTRICT

We are witnessing what happens when shareholder owned utilities are accountable to no one but themselves and their shareholders

**Statement of Alderman Robert J. Bauman
August 13, 2021**

The rash of power outages, some lasting for days, caused by severe weather is demonstrating that WE Energies, along with the other shareholder owned public utilities in Wisconsin are essentially accountable to no one but themselves and their shareholders. Unlike Milwaukee's water utility which is owned by the citizens of Milwaukee and overseen by the Common Council and mayor, there is no one to complain to and no one to vote against when WE Energies fails to deliver on their responsibilities to their customers and the public. Customers cannot take their business to a different electricity supplier. They are at the mercy of WE Energies, an absolute monopoly accountable to no other than an obscure regulatory agency in Madison known as the Public Service Commission which is headed up by unelected politically appointed part-time commissioners who are largely beholden to the shareholder owned utilities they supposedly regulate.

This fundamental lack of accountability and oversight has been present for decades and represented a disaster waiting to happen. Well we have gotten a taste of the dimensions of that disaster this week.

The media footage of the elderly and disabled nursing home residents stranded on the upper floors of their homes with no power, with no elevator service, in extreme heat conditions were heart wrenching. To make matters worse, this nursing home was next door to a major WE Energies maintenance yard. If this situation had involved the Milwaukee water utility, the aldermen and mayor would have read the water utility's manager the riot act and repairs would have been made immediately. That manager might have been fired on the spot.

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With WE Energies, we got a shrug of the shoulders.

BTW, the manager of the Milwaukee Water Works earns about \$130,000 a year. The CEO of WE Energies earns millions of dollars a year.

Bottom line: we need fundamental reform in the way shareholder owned public utilities are regulated in Wisconsin and a return to some measure of local control over these rapacious monopolies.

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