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MOVES TO AFFECT HEALTH CARE FOR ELDERLY. C1

DIGGING DEEPER

Organization's effort wipes out \$21M of medical debt

Dayton Collaboratory helps more than 15,000 people.

By **Samantha Wildow**
Staff Writer

A local campaign from the Dayton Collaboratory raised \$137,850 in order to erase \$21.95 million in qualifying medical debt for thousands of local families – with

Clark County seeing the biggest chunk of that with nearly \$9.4 million-worth of debt eliminated. “To me, it just reflected very well on the leadership that’s there,” Peter Benkendorf, founder of the Collaboratory, said about Clark County and organizations there that helped with the campaign. Benkendorf highlighted organizations like the Mercy Health Foundation and Turner Foundation for raising and match-

ing funds for the campaign. The average amount of medical debt that was eliminated ranged between \$1,000 and \$1,700 across seven counties. For the 15,378 people impacted, though, a single mom in Xenia with medical debt upwards of \$69,000 was among those helped. The medical debt stemmed from the Xenia woman beating stage

Debt continued on A6



Peter Benkendorf, founder of the Dayton Collaboratory in Dayton. The Dayton Collaboratory recently finished its medical debt campaign. BRANDON BERRY / CONTRIBUTED

ONLY IN THE DAYTON DAILY NEWS

Consumers office urges state to reject \$189M in charges

By **Thomas Gnau**
Staff Writer

An office representing consumer interests is urging state regulators to reject nearly \$190 million in charges to operate older Eisenhower-era coal-fired electric generation plants.

It says the cost to run the plants was greater than the electricity sold and the loss was passed on to consumers.

The Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel filed a recent brief urging members of the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio to reject \$189 million in Ohio Valley Electric Corp. coal plant charges billed to customers of AES Ohio, AEP Ohio and Duke Energy Ohio consumers between 2021 and 2023.

AES Ohio has more than 500,000 customers in southwest Ohio.

The office also wants regulators to seek refunds “where costs were unlawfully collected.”

“The utilities ran the coal plants on a 24/7 basis, using a ‘must-run’ commitment status, meaning that the plants would keep running even though the utilities knew in advance the plants would lose money,” the office said in a brief filed Feb. 10. “And lose money they did.”

From 2021 to 2023, consumers paid \$189 million for the operation of those coal plants, the office said.

AES Ohio, the former Dayton Power & Light, with other Ohio power companies, make up OVEC, which operates older, coal-fired power plants located along the Ohio River, one of them in Indiana.

The OCC's filing focuses on how it says OVEC operated its Kyger Creek and Clifty Creek coal plants during an audit period. The plants cost more to run than the electricity they produced was worth



The Kyger Creek Power Plant, a coal-fired power plant, operates on April 14, 2025, near Cheshire, Ohio. A group representing consumers says excess costs shouldn't be passed along. JOSHUA A. BICKEL / AP

in the market, the office argues.

“Ohio consumers should never have been forced to bankroll losses from uneconomic, decades-old coal plants,” Maureen Willis, agency director of the Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel, said in a statement. “Utilities continued running these plants knowing that consumers, not shareholders, would absorb the losses.”

The coal plants are owned by a consortium of eight utilities that make up OVEC. They sell their generation into the electric market operated by PJM Interconnection.

Last August, the Ohio Manufacturers Association said Ohio electric ratepayers subsidized

more than \$683 million dollars in losses for OVEC's operations.

“Ohio consumers – including AES Ohio customers in Dayton – paid millions of dollars to cover losses from OVEC coal plants that were more expensive to run than the power they produced was worth,” a spokesman for the consumer's office said.

However, in a reply brief with the PUCO, OVEC said an auditor determined that a must-run operation for the coal plants was “prudent.”

“The intervenors’ challenges to the auditor’s determinations mix Monday morning-quarterbacking, cherry-picking of the record, reliance upon witnesses

with no practical experience, and outright mischaracterizations,” the brief said.

A third-party auditor found that AES Ohio, AEP Ohio and Duke “all acted reasonably and prudently on their OVEC interests. PUCO staff has concurred with the auditor's assessment. The PUCO is now reviewing the findings after last year's hearing and briefings and their decision is pending,” a spokeswoman for AES Ohio said in a statement.

A spokesman for Columbus power provider American Electric Power referred to the reply brief.

AES Ohio has a 4.9% stake in OVEC, while AEP's stake exceeds 39%.

IN-DEPTH COVERAGE

Trump likely to focus on midterm voters in speech

State of the Union possible preview to election message.

By **Josh Boak**
and **Michelle L. Price**
Associated Press

WASHINGTON – President Donald Trump's State of the Union address today is likely to be a test run of the message that Republicans will give to voters in November's elections for control of the House and Senate.

The president and his party appear vulnerable, with polls showing that much of America distrusts how Trump has managed the government in his first year back in office. In addition, the Supreme Court last week struck down one of the chief levers of his economic and foreign policy by ruling that he lacked the power to impose many of his sweeping tariffs.

Though Trump is expected to focus on domestic issues, his intensifying threats that he may launch military strikes on Iran over its nuclear program are casting a shadow over the address.

Here are a few things to watch as Trump tries to make his case:

Midterm continued on A6

THE LATEST

Man with gun killed after entering north gate at Mar-a-Lago. **B1**

Some trans residents' licenses will no longer be valid in Kansas. **B2**

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