



EYE ON THE INDUSTRY

**Monthly Notes on Issues
Affecting Wisconsin Consumers**

Fever broken? Collapse of the planned takeover by Chicago's **Exelon** of New Jersey's **PSEG**, noted here last month, is now followed by Baltimore's **Constellation** Energy breaking off talks with Florida's **FPL**, suggesting that a resurgence of 1990s merger fever has certainly cooled and may have had less momentum than earlier appeared. **All those surprised, raise your hands:** An early November poll of Illinois electricity customers ferrets out strong sentiment in favor of keeping the **rate freeze** imposed by the state Legislature as part of the state's "deregulation" scheme nine years ago. The freeze set to expire next month and big rate hikes are planned; the trouble is, '90s lawmakers cut retail rates 20 percent, froze them at reduced levels, and utilities say **bankruptcy** looms if they don't catch up. **Slow reactions....**The U.S., European Union, and several other nations join in a **fusion energy** project, seeking to duplicate the reaction that powers the sun. It leaves no emissions and much-reduced waste compared with fission, but don't hold your breath: With the \$13 billion reactor construction to start in France in **2007**, the project has a **35-year timeline**.