

La. utility backs regulation

By Gerard Shields
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Terry Huval, director of the Lafayette Utilities System, was on Capitol Hill last week urging Congress to make the nation's railroads come under anti-trust laws affecting other industries.

In the early 1980s, 40 freight rail carriers existed in the nation. But after deregulation, the number whittled down to four. Huval, who also serves as chairman of the American Public Power Association, said the absence of more competition leaves railroads able to charge whatever they want.

LUS owns a coal-generated power plant in Boyce that depends on shipments from Wyoming. Because of the lack of competition, the utility spends \$15 million a year more than it would if it could get competitive bids, Huval said. That expense gets passed on to utility users, he said.

"You don't really have a competitive environment anymore," Huval said.

Attempts to pass legislation in Congress to put the railroads under the nation's anti-trust laws have been unsuccessful. But Huval pledged to keep working on the issue.

"The burden of contesting it lies with the customer," Huval said.