



Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel

Your Residential Utility Consumer Advocate

CONSUMERS' FACT SHEET

Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel

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HOW TO TESTIFY AT LOCAL PUBLIC HEARINGS



When actions taken by Ohio's investor-owned public utilities affect you directly, there are various opportunities for you to express your opinion or provide feedback to regulators. One of the best ways to make your voice heard is to testify at a local public hearing.

Get informed

The Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) holds public hearings to give consumers an opportunity to comment about utility issues, such as proposed rate increases, that will affect them. To find out the location of the local public hearing nearest you, contact the Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel (OCC) at 1-877-742-5622 (toll free).

For all cases involving applications for an increase in rates, the PUCO must hold at least one public hearing located within the utility's service area. Hearings also must be held in cities with a population of at least 100,000. In many cases, the PUCO will hold more than one public hearing,

depending on the level of public interest. If you would like to request a hearing in your community, please contact the PUCO at 1-800-686-7826.

Share your opinion

You can share your views with your utility company, the PUCO and the OCC by testifying at a public hearing. It is extremely important for utility consumers to provide their input because their comments become a part of the permanent record of the case that the PUCO commissioners consider before reaching a decision. Consumer testimony can help the PUCO commissioners reach a more consumer-friendly decision.

Public speaking practice helps

The idea of public speaking makes almost everyone nervous. One way to combat stage fright is to be certain you are prepared for the hearing. It is recommended that you:

- ▶ Write out a statement or notes beforehand;
- ▶ Keep your speech short and to the point; and

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The Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel (OCC), the residential utility consumer advocate, represents the interests of 4.5 million households in proceedings before state and federal regulators and in the courts.

The state agency also educates consumers about electric, natural gas, telephone and water issues.

For more information, please visit the OCC website at www.pickocc.org.



The Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel is an equal opportunity employer and provider of services.

- ▶ Practice your testimony in front of friends.

Once you are prepared, speaking at a public hearing will be relatively easy.

When it's time to testify

As you enter the hearing room, you will be asked to sign your name on a roster. The hearing examiner will call your name from the roster when it is your turn to speak. At that time, you may decide to speak or not. When all of the speakers on the signed roster have spoken, you will be offered an opportunity to speak if you have not yet done so.

If you decide to testify, you will be asked your name and address, and to recite an oath. After you have made your statement, you may be asked questions either by representatives of the PUCO, the OCC or the utility. The hearing examiner, however, is not required to respond to your questions should you have any.

The contents of your testimony are up to you. You may want to explain how a rate increase would affect you, focus on a specific complaint about your service quality or support the position of an individual who testified ahead of you. Your testimony will allow the PUCO commissioners and others to understand how their decisions will affect your life.

Other ways to get involved

- ▶ Encourage others to testify;
- ▶ Use the Internet and e-mail to spread information to other concerned citizens or file a comment at the PUCO <http://dis.puc.state.oh.us/>;
- ▶ Contact your state legislators and the governor;
- ▶ Inform the local news media about the importance of reporting about the local hearing;
- ▶ Write a letter to the editor of local newspapers;
- ▶ Discuss your opinion by calling a local talk radio program;
- ▶ Start a petition drive and file the petition with the PUCO;
- ▶ Talk to your local elected officials and ask them to pass resolutions and file them with the PUCO;
- ▶ Organize a local consumer group; and
- ▶ Write letters to the PUCO commissioners. Include the company name and case number in your letter and send it to:

**Public Utilities Commission of Ohio
Docketing Division
180 E. Broad St.
Columbus, Ohio 43215**

Visit the "Action Alerts" section of the OCC's website

Visit the "Action Alerts" section of the OCC's website,

www.pickocc.org/action

to learn more ways you can get involved to make a difference in the issues affecting Ohio's residential utility consumers.