



A message from Bruce J. Weston Interim Consumers' Counsel

The Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel (OCC), in its 35th year, continued its mission of providing representation and education for Ohio's residential utility consumers. In 2011, the OCC's efforts saved Ohioans many millions of dollars on their utility bills. These savings sometimes were achieved through the OCC's advocacy with others and sometimes through the OCC's advocacy on its own.

Consumer protection again had a heightened significance, as many Ohioans continued with the challenges of a difficult economy and 30 percent of Ohioans were at or below 200 percent of the poverty level. Here are some highlights of the OCC's efforts in a year when the OCC's staff again demonstrated their commitment to public service:

- ▶ Customers of American Electric Power (AEP) received \$78 million as a result of a decision by the Supreme Court of Ohio in an appeal. Customers also received the return of \$43 million because of AEP's excessive earnings.
- ▶ Customers benefited from the elimination of AEP's proposed \$93 million distribution service revenue increase, among other positive outcomes in a case that OCC and others settled with AEP. Also, in a case involving AEP's proposed electric security plan, OCC and several other parties opposed a settlement containing a rate increase that AEP and others asked the PUCO to approve. In a December 2011 decision, AEP's settlement was approved with modifications, but ultimately the entire settlement was rejected in a February 2012 decision.
- ▶ Customers of Duke Energy Ohio will benefit from lower electric rates in 2012 by about 17.5 percent, after Duke conducted an auction that was arranged by an agreement with the OCC and others. Duke's customers also were not charged for \$15.2 million that Duke sought to collect for storm costs related to Hurricane Ike.
- ▶ Customers of FirstEnergy did not have to pay \$135 million in charges, as a result of a federal case. OCC successfully proposed that customers should not have to pay for the utility's business decision to switch regional transmission organizations.
- ▶ Customers should benefit from a new securitization law, Amended Substitute House Bill 364, which was enacted in 2011. OCC worked with the Ohio General Assembly and interested parties toward assuring savings for customers.

I thank the OCC's staff for their countless efforts to protect Ohio consumers and recognize the commitment and concern for Ohioans that former Consumers' Counsel Janine Migden-Ostrander demonstrated during her years of leadership in public service. The year 2011 was one of change for the OCC, with a budget and staff reduction and the closing of the consumer call center. I appreciate the efforts of the many former employees who were so much a part of the OCC and our accomplishments in the past year. I thank the members of the OCC Governing Board, former Chairman Solove and former Board member Leslie for their guidance and support to the agency. And also, on this 35th anniversary, I acknowledge the service of the many employees and Board members who helped Ohio consumers throughout OCC's history.

The OCC looks forward to working with state policymakers and other stakeholders in 2012. Our continued vision is for utility services that are affordable and reliable for Ohioans.