

## **A message from Gene Krebs**

### ***Governing Board Chairman***

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On behalf of the Governing Board of the Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel (OCC), I present OCC's 2012 Annual Report to the Ohio General Assembly. I appreciate the opportunity to serve as Governing Board Chairman, in OCC's fourth decade of advocating for Ohioans regarding their electric, natural gas, telephone, and water services.

In 2012, the Board appointed Bruce Weston as the Ohio Consumers' Counsel. Mr. Weston is a respected consumer advocate who, in public service and private practice, has more than thirty years of experience in this field. He has the knowledge, dedication and vision to lead the agency into the future for its advocacy on behalf of Ohio consumers.

The Governing Board welcomed three new members in 2012, appointed by Attorney General Mike DeWine: Jason Clark of Dayton; Susheela Suguness of Columbus; and Stuart Young of Springfield. I look forward to their participation in the work of the Board for OCC's consumer advocacy. The Board elected Joe Logan as Vice-Chairman.

The Governing Board also said farewell in 2012 to four of its members. These members were: John Moliterno, whose dedication to Ohio consumers and guidance for consumer advocacy spanned nine years on the Board, including as Chairman in his final year; Roger Wise, who committed six years and much support for consumer advocacy during his time on the Board and whose father served on the Board in OCC's early years; Harold Cassel, who showed concern for Ohioans and for OCC's leaders and staff during his service since 2010; and Anthony Peto, who contributed to Board policy and guidance during his service since 2009. The Board honored their public service with individual resolutions.

The Board was impressed with the breadth of OCC's consumer advocacy across many utility issues in 2012. The issues of the Board's concern included the reliability of consumers' electric service and restoration of their service after storms, the availability and price of basic telephone service, and the challenges for consumers to make informed and cost-effective choices in their purchase of electricity and natural gas.

I express my appreciation to the Ohio General Assembly and to the Administration for preserving OCC's budget at \$5.6 million for consumer advocacy, avoiding the additional budget reduction of \$1.5 million that otherwise would have occurred for OCC on July 1, 2012. And I look forward to OCC's work with state policy makers on consumer issues in 2013.

The Chair has learned some valuable lessons in the past couple of years on maintaining a better handle on feedback from the various stakeholders. While the Board is still settling into a new paradigm within our mission as outlined in the law, the Chair is intent on developing new methods of approaching our issues. Please expect 2013 to be a year of further refinement and cooperation. Input from the political leadership of Ohio is appreciated.

I thank Consumers' Counsel Weston and the staff of OCC for their dedicated service to Ohio's utility consumers in 2012. The Board looks forward to providing guidance and support for OCC's fulfillment of its mission in 2013.