

A message from Gene Krebs

Governing Board Chairman



On behalf of the Governing Board of the Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel (OCC), I present to the Ohio General Assembly our 2013 Annual Report. The Annual Report records OCC's many activities for Ohio's residential utility consumers during the past year.

Governing Board members and the OCC staff again demonstrated their fulfillment of the agency's mission of representing and educating Ohioans regarding their electric, natural gas, telephone, and water services. I appreciate Consumers' Counsel Bruce Weston and Deputy Consumers' Counsel Melissa Yost for their leadership and thank them and the OCC staff for their dedication to serving Ohio's utility consumers.

In 2013, we welcomed Fred Cooke of Shelby and Roland Taylor of Stow to the OCC Governing Board, as appointed by Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine. I appreciate that the Attorney General also provided for my continued service to residential utility consumers by reappointing me to the Board. We said farewell to Board member and former Vice-Chair Joe Logan, who served on the Board with commitment and concern for Ohio consumers since 2007. The Board elected Susheela Suguness as Vice-Chair.

I thank my colleagues for the Governing Board's active role in providing guidance and support to OCC for consumer protection in 2013. The Board's activities included passage of several resolutions on key consumer issues.

In one resolution, the Board supported advocacy by OCC to preserve, for the economic benefit of electric and natural gas consumers, the option of utility standard offers. Also, the Board resolved that price and quality protections should be maintained for consumers subscribing to basic telephone service. And, by resolution, the Board opposed efforts to weaken longstanding Ohio law that protects consumers by limiting utility charges to the current costs of utility service. This resolution was prompted by efforts of utilities to charge customers for the clean-up costs of defunct manufactured gas plants that became operational as long ago as the 1800's.

The Board held one of its meetings on the Yellow Springs dairy farm of Board member Stuart Young. In that setting, rural issues were discussed and several farmers shared with the Board their concerns that some farmers' residential electric service was being changed to commercial service without adequate notice. A representative of the Ohio Farm Bureau Federation also addressed this issue during a presentation to the Board, and I appreciate that the Farm Bureau then developed a policy toward seeking more protection for Ohio farmers regarding changes in their residential electric service.

I, along with my Board colleagues and Consumers' Counsel Weston, express our gratitude to policymakers and stakeholders with whom we worked on utility consumer issues in 2013. We thank the members of the Ohio General Assembly and the Governor's Office for considering our recommendations on these matters affecting Ohioans' utility bills and the reliability of their utility services. I look forward to our continued service to Ohioans in 2014.