

A message from Bruce Weston

Ohio Consumers' Counsel



The vision of the Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel (OCC) is to advocate for affordable utility bills and reliable utility services for Ohioans in 4.5 million households. I am pleased to report that the staff of OCC dedicated themselves in 2013 to advocacy for our fellow Ohioans regarding their residential electric, natural gas, telephone and water services.

In 2013, the Consumers' Counsel Governing Board continued its tradition of guidance for OCC's services to consumers, with the leadership of Chair Gene Krebs and with his and the Board members' demonstration of concern through resolutions and engagement on consumer issues. I thank Governing Board Chair Krebs, Vice-Chair Susheela Suguness and the Board members for their guidance and support. I extend best wishes and appreciation to former member (and former Vice-Chair) Joe

Logan who served on the Board with dedication to Ohio consumers and support for OCC staff since 2007.

At the end of 2013, Ohio's residential consumers were paying, on average, higher electric rates than consumers in 32 other states (according to federal data). Ohio can do better for electric consumers. There is a disconnect between low prices in the energy market and Ohioans' higher electric utility bills. This variance can be explained in part because several of Ohio's electric utilities are charging their generation service customers hundreds of millions of dollars above market prices.

Ohioans' electric bills were also at risk from the electric utilities' efforts to change Ohio's 2008 energy law. Utilities sought to profit from energy efficiency at the expense of Ohio consumers and to eliminate the preference for renewable energy produced in Ohio. The General Assembly did not change Ohio's energy law in 2013, and I appreciate the legislators' thoughtful approach to these issues.

On the other hand, Ohio's natural gas utilities provided another good year for Ohioans who chose the utilities' standard offers for their natural gas supply. The favorable prices for the utilities' standard offers were much more in sync with low market prices than those of several of the electric utilities.

Some key OCC accomplishments are listed on the inside front cover, with more details in this Annual Report. OCC continues to return great value to Ohioans for its budget.

I am grateful to the staff of OCC and to Deputy Consumers' Counsel Melissa Yost for their dedicated public service in 2013. I thank the General Assembly and the Administration for the opportunities to discuss utility issues of importance to Ohioans. And I appreciate the other policymakers and stakeholders that OCC worked with on consumer issues throughout the year. We look forward to serving Ohioans in 2014.