
Annual Report

2013



Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel
"Your Residential Utility Consumer Advocate"



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Among OCC's accomplishments for Ohio consumers in 2013 are the following:

- ▶ FirstEnergy's 1.9 million customers benefited from the advocacy of Ohio Consumers' Counsel (OCC) and others in March when the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) limited, to \$10 million, the amount the utility could annually charge customers in "shared savings." (Shared savings is an incentive that the utility seeks to collect from customers when the utility exceeds the state's energy efficiency targets.) (See Page 11)
- ▶ OCC recommended that the PUCO should require FirstEnergy to bid its projected energy efficiency resources into the PJM capacity auction, for the purpose of reducing the price for energy efficiency and capacity that customers ultimately pay. In its decision, the PUCO ordered FirstEnergy to bid 75 percent of its projected energy efficiency savings into the capacity auction. (See Page 11)
- ▶ As a result of competitive auctions that OCC and others support, customers who purchased their natural gas through the standard offer continued to see low prices for natural gas on their bills from Columbia Gas, Dominion East Ohio and Vectren. And in January, the PUCO approved agreements OCC negotiated with Columbia and Dominion that preserved the standard offer for residential customers until at least 2017 (for Columbia customers) and 2016 (for Dominion customers). (See Page 15)
- ▶ In January, OCC reached an agreement with Frontier Communications and the PUCO Staff that brought broadband to an area in Southern Ohio that was not in the telephone utility's immediate plans for broadband deployment. A \$100,000 penalty owed by Frontier for a service quality noncompliance was used to fund that broadband project. The parties reached a similar agreement in November to utilize another \$100,000 penalty owed by Frontier, to fund the deployment of broadband to an unserved area in Ashland County. (See Page 18)
- ▶ OCC advocated to protect customers from paying millions of dollars for FirstEnergy's unreasonable decisions to purchase renewable energy at higher than market prices. In August, the PUCO ordered FirstEnergy to credit its customers \$43.4 million (plus interest). (See Page 12)
- ▶ OCC negotiated a settlement with Duke Energy, the PUCO Staff, and other parties that reduced, by \$37 million (from \$86 million to \$49 million), Duke's request to increase its distribution rates. The settlement, among other things, did not allow Duke to use customers' utility bills as a way to collect costs associated with Cincinnati's streetcar project. (See Page 10)
- ▶ OCC recommended that the PUCO allow residential electric consumers to opt out of having a smart meter in their homes, if they do not want one. In an October decision, the PUCO adopted a rule that provides residential electric consumers with the right to opt-out of having a smart meter installed in their homes. (See Page 12)
- ▶ Customers of two natural gas utilities, Northeast and Orwell, were credited nearly \$1.5 million after the utilities charged unreasonably high prices for natural gas. In a hearing at the PUCO, OCC and the PUCO Staff presented evidence showing that the two utilities had engaged in unreasonable purchasing practices. (See Page 15)
- ▶ OCC negotiated a settlement—with Dayton Power & Light (DP&L), the PUCO Staff, and others—that established DP&L's energy efficiency portfolio for 2013 through 2015. The settlement benefits customers by limiting the amounts that DP&L can charge customers for shared savings and lost revenues, and requires DP&L to bid its energy efficiency resources into the PJM capacity auction which may result in lower energy prices for customers. (See Page 11)

The Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel

► Mission

OCC advocates for Ohio's residential utility consumers through representation and education in a variety of forums.

► Vision

Informed consumers able to choose among a variety of affordable, quality utility services with options to control and customize their utility usage.

► Core Values

Justice

We will advocate for what is fair for Ohio's residential utility consumers.

Integrity

We will conduct ourselves in a manner consistent with the highest ethical standards.

Excellence

We will produce work that is high quality and we will strive to continuously improve our services.

Communications

We will share information and ideas to contribute to the making of optimal decisions by our colleagues and ourselves.

Respect

We will treat each other, our partners and the public with consideration and appreciation.

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