

## **A message from Gene Krebs**

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

---



My colleagues and I on the Consumers' Counsel Governing Board are pleased to present this Annual Report to the Ohio General Assembly. The Annual Report outlines the agency's activities to help Ohioans, through representation and education, regarding their residential utility services in 2014. I commend Consumers' Counsel Weston and the agency's staff for their service to fellow Ohioans through legal representation and education.

Consumer protection continued to be a critical need last year in light of utility proposals to increase charges to customers. We serve Ohioans at a time of change for utility services they depend upon in their daily lives. Changes are especially apparent with regard to electric service. Ohio consumers have seen electric prices that are too high with the potential, some say, to spiral even higher.

Given the significance of electric service issues for Ohio families and our state economy, the Governing Board is reviewing, in 2015, how Ohioans have fared under the restructuring of the electric industry (to a competitive market for generation) that began with a 1999 law. It concerns me that, in 2014, Ohio consumers were paying more for electric service, on average, than consumers in 32 other states. (That statistic is based on data from the U.S. Energy Information Administration.) Questions for the Board's focus include why the restructuring of the industry has not resulted in electric prices that are lower than current levels for residential consumers, especially considering that the competitive market has had relatively low prices for energy.

The Board was pleased to see the agency participate in the state fair and in county fairs last year, as the Board encouraged. Ohio's tradition of state and county fairs provides an additional opportunity for outreach and education with Ohioans.

Board member Roland Taylor arranged for presentations to the Governing Board on Ohio's natural gas production industry, during our November meeting. I thank him, the Plumbers and Pipefitters Local Union 189 that assisted, and those making presentations for an informative session.

I thank Attorney General Mike DeWine for his reappointments last year of Board members Sally Hughes, Michael Watkins, and Fred Yoder. I appreciate the public service, to the Board and consumers, of former Deputy Consumers' Counsel Melissa Yost. And the Board was pleased to appoint Larry Sauer, a dedicated consumer advocate, as Deputy Consumers' Counsel.

I thank Consumers' Counsel Bruce Weston for his leadership and commitment to excellence in the agency's services to Ohioans. I acknowledge and thank policymakers and stakeholders who worked in the interest of Ohio consumers in 2014. I extend gratitude to the Ohio General Assembly and the Governor's Office in providing for the agency to serve Ohioans.

I look forward to our opportunities in 2015 to assist Ohioans with their utility services, including helping them save money on their utility bills.