



## Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel

Your Residential Utility Consumer Advocate

# CONSUMERS' FACT SHEET

### Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel

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# HOW TO TESTIFY AT LOCAL PUBLIC HEARINGS



It is important to know that you can express your concerns to those who make decisions about the utility rates you pay. One of the best ways to make your voice heard is to testify at a local public hearing.

### Get informed

The Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) holds local public hearings to give consumers an opportunity to comment about utility issues, such as proposed rate increases, that will affect them.

For cases involving requests for rate increases, the PUCO must hold at least one public hearing within the utility's service area. In many cases, the PUCO will hold more than one local public hearing. If you would like to request a hearing in your community, please contact the PUCO at 1-800-686-7826.

### Share your opinion

You can share your views with your utility company, the PUCO and OCC by testifying at a local public hearing. This consumer testimony can be important because it becomes a part of the permanent case record that the PUCO commissioners use to make decisions.

### Practice helps for public speaking

The thought of public speaking makes almost everyone nervous. One way to combat stage fright is to be certain you are prepared for the hearing. It is recommended that you:

- ▶ Write out a statement or notes beforehand;
- ▶ Keep your comments short and to the point; and
- ▶ Practice your comments in front of others.

Once you are prepared, speaking at a public hearing should be easy.

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The Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel (OCC), the residential utility consumer advocate, represents the interests of 4.5 million households in proceedings before state and federal regulators and in the courts.

The state agency also educates consumers about electric, natural gas, telephone and water issues.

For more information, please visit the OCC website at [www.occ.ohio.gov](http://www.occ.ohio.gov).



*The Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel is an equal opportunity employer and provider of services.*

### When it's time to testify

When you arrive at the local public hearing, you will be asked to sign your name on a roster. As the public hearing progresses, your name will be called when it is your turn to speak. When all of the speakers on the signed roster have spoken, others will be offered an opportunity to speak if they have not yet done so.

If you decide to speak, you will be asked for your name and address, and to recite an oath. After you have made your statement, you may be asked questions by representatives of the PUCO, OCC or the utility. You may have your own questions to ask, but questions are not typically answered during a statement at a hearing.

The content of your statement is up to you. You may want to explain how a rate increase would affect you, talk about whether you are satisfied with the quality of your utility service or support the position of an individual who has spoken ahead of you. Your statement can enable the PUCO commissioners to understand how their decisions impact your life and finances.

### Other ways to get involved

- ▶ Encourage others to testify;
- ▶ File a comment at the PUCO's web site <http://dis.puc.state.oh.us> by entering the appropriate case number and clicking the "File a Comment" link. Or send a paper letter by mail to the PUCO commissioners at:

**Public Utilities Commission of Ohio, Docketing Division  
180 East Broad Street,  
11th Floor  
Columbus, Ohio 43215**

Include the company name and case number (if any) in your letter;

- ▶ Discuss with the local news media the importance of reporting about the local hearing and other case issues;
- ▶ Write a letter to the editor of local newspapers;
- ▶ Talk to your local elected officials about the possibility of passing resolutions for filing with the PUCO;
- ▶ Work with others on a petition that can be filed with the PUCO.