
Office of Consumer Counsel

To: Connecticut General Assembly Members
From: Consumer Counsel Mary J. Healey
Re: Office of Consumer Counsel - Positive Fiscal Results On Budget
Date: February 4, 2009

- The Office of Consumer Counsel (OCC) is completely ratepayer funded and thus its expenses have **NO fiscal impact** on the state budget. One dollar eliminated from the OCC has absolutely **NO effect** on the state budget.
 - OCC funnels approximately \$600,000 from ratepayers to the general fund through consulting fees paid to agencies such as DAS, DOIT, DPW, in addition to providing ratepayer funds which are used by the state to cover overhead expenses for all state government activities.
 - OCC's FY 2009 Budget is \$3,069,000, all of it coming from the ratepayer-funded Consumer Counsel Fund (§16-48a & §16-49) – **not a penny comes from the General Fund or taxes.**
 - The agency adheres to **results based accountability** – we work hard on behalf of ratepayers in order to bring about fair utility rates and overall policy.
 - In the last five years the OCC has saved ratepayers over \$2.5 billion in major rate cases and other dockets. OCC measures its advocacy's performance and effectiveness on behalf of ratepayers through its annual scorecard. Details are available at www.ct.gov/occ.
 - The Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee declared in 1997 :

“...the [OCC] enhances the DPUC's work, resulting in decisions that better reflect the public interest....The Department has been the beneficiary of the services of the independent Office of Consumer Counsel for over 20 years. The OCC has unstintingly represented ratepayer interests...”

Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee's January 22, 1997 report.
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- The OCC is a state appointed, independent state agency established in 1975 to advocate for all utility ratepayers in Connecticut - residential, commercial & industrial. The OCC's 17-member legal and financial staff brings many years of experience and expertise to the complex issues involved in utility regulation to protect ratepayer interests. The OCC also **promotes** and **protects** ratepayer interests by serving on energy-related boards established by state law as well as national boards.
- The OCC **advocates** for ratepayers in dockets heard before the Department of Public Utility Control (DPUC) on every regulated utility, electric power procurement, quality of customer service, land sales, financial reviews, telephone, cable, gas and water issues, new service offerings, new regulations governing public utility companies, and ratepayer education.

- The OCC also **advocates** for ratepayers in federal and regional forums, including at the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, the Federal Communications Commission and in regional proceedings involving ISO New England. This advocacy has reduced overpayments of power plants by hundreds of millions of dollars and protected the privacy rights and competitive interests of Connecticut telecommunications customers.
- The OCC **testifies** to the General Assembly on pending energy legislation, **fights** for just and reasonable rates in administrative hearings and court cases, and **educates** elected officials and others on utility issues. The agency **cooperates** in good faith with utility, business, consumer interest groups and legislators to enact beneficial laws and public policies.

For more information, contact the Office of Consumer Counsel at 860-827-2900