

Testimony of Gladys M. Brown
Senate Consumer Protection and
Professional Licensure Committee
September 24, 2013

Good afternoon Chairman Tomlinson, Chairwoman Boscola and members of the Senate Consumer Protection and Professional Licensure Committee. It is an honor and privilege to appear before you today and provide testimony concerning my nomination to serve as a Pennsylvania Public Utility Commissioner.

While I know many of you well and have worked with you professionally on a variety of issues, I wanted to provide background information about me and my qualifications to serve on the PUC. I am a central Pennsylvania native having graduated from Middletown Area School District. After graduation I went to the University of Pittsburgh where I received my Bachelor of Arts and Juris Doctor degrees.

Upon graduation from law school in 1988, I served as an assistant counsel for the Bureau of Professional and Occupational Affairs in the Department of State. In fact, one of the tasks of this position was delivering packets of promulgated regulations to the standing committees of the General Assembly.

I fondly recall delivering regulations to the longtime chair of this committee, Senator Clarence Bell, and answering questions about the regulations and other issues from lawmakers and their staff. After two years with the Department of State, I returned to Pittsburgh to clerk for the Honorable Paul A. Simmons, Judge for the U.S. District Court, Western District of Pennsylvania.

In 1991, following the judge's retirement, I took a position with the Senate Democratic Leader's Office as an assistant counsel. Because of my previous experience with the Bureau of Professional and Occupational Affairs, I was assigned, among other things, to handle legal matters for the Consumer Protection and Professional Licensure Committee. By 1993, my work began in earnest on the many major utility issues that have come before the General Assembly over the last two decades.

During my more than 22 years of legal and legislative experience with the Senate, I have worked on all of the major deregulation bills – including telecommunications, electricity and natural gas. I have worked on Chapter 14 legislation, Act 129 of 2008, dealing with energy efficiency and procurement as well as the recent Act 11 of 2012 which -- as you know -- involved the expansion of the Distribution System Improvement Charge

My approach to working on these major legislative measures has remained consistent: educate myself about the details of the issue; gain a full and deep understanding of the arguments for and against a particular proposal; share with members of the committee information that helps form a position; and, address questions about the impact of the legislation on constituents and businesses. In other words, I have always tried to find a fair and balanced approach in dealing with issues and I take seriously the possible effect of my work and opinions on the everyday lives of the people of Pennsylvania.

My commitment to this committee, the members of the Senate and to the constituents that you represent is to use this same work ethic as a PUC commissioner. This work ethic is

important when working toward the ultimate goal of protecting consumers. I believe this approach, combined with my legislative and legal experience, would be an asset to the commission as it confronts future challenges. This experience has even spilled into my community activities where I have organized community programs to educate consumers on understanding the choices and tools they have available to them to reduce energy costs. Grassroots efforts such as this are important to me and one of my goals, as a member of the Commission, would be to increase efforts to educate consumers.

Over the many years and throughout the various utility issues that I have dealt with as Legal Counsel for the Senate Democratic Caucus, it has been a pleasure to work with the commissioners and the staff at the PUC. They are very professional, helpful and responsive to the concerns of lawmakers. Just as significant, I know first-hand the importance of furthering good relations between the General Assembly and the Public Utility Commission. It is in this vein that I can use my experience to be an effective, responsible and conscientious commissioner.

Even with all the excitement over my nomination to the PUC by Governor Corbett, I have to acknowledge that this is a bittersweet moment for me. I love the legislative process and the people that I have met in the Senate and the House. I have had a great working relationship with the staff in both caucuses and I cherish the support and friendships of many members and staff on both sides of the aisle. I will truly miss the spirited debates, discussions, and, even the unanimous consent resolutions. I am very humbled to be nominated for this post.

Thank you once again for allowing me to come before you today and for considering my nomination to the Public Utility Commission. I look forward to answering any questions.