



PUBLIC HEARING PROCESS & TIPS FOR CONSUMERS FROM THE PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION

PUC RATEMAKING PROCESS



The PUC Rate-making Process and the Role of Consumers

Regulation

In order to provide economical and efficient service to a community, the state grants electric distribution, natural gas distribution, water, sewer, water and wastewater services, the right to provide local service within a specified geographic area. History shows that economic decline that the construction of distribution facilities by multiple utilities in the same location would be extremely costly and disruptive to communities. The utility is regulated by state government to ensure that rates for sale and adequate service.

Competition is permitted in the supply of electricity and natural gas. Changes for the supply of electricity and natural gas to licensed competitors are not regulated and are based on market prices. Many electric utilities are generating under regulated generation rate caps or utility services. The price for the delivery through the distribution system of electric and natural gas continues to be regulated by the PUC.

Competition rates is permitted for long-distance and local telephone services. Most local telephone services operate under a prior utility regime that limits their ability to seek rate increases based on the rate of inflation and other factors. The rates for competitive local exchange carriers that are competitive against the incumbent local telephone companies are subject to PUC approval.

Filing for a Rate Increase

When a regulated utility seeks a base rate increase, it must file a request with the PUC that shows the proposed rate rates and effective date, and must prove that the increase is needed. The utility also must notify customers at least 60 days in advance. The notice must include the amount of the proposed rate increase, the proposed effective date, and how much more the consumer can expect to pay.

How the PUC Sets Rates

The rate-making process ensures the lowest reasonable rate for consumers while maintaining the financial stability of utilities. Under this law, the utility is entitled to recovery of its reasonably incurred expenses and a fair return on its investment. The PUC evaluates each utility's request for a rate increase based on those criteria.

How Long It Takes

By operation of law, the rate request is suspended for up to seven months if the PUC does not act before the proposed effective date for the rate increase for electric, natural gas, water, sewer and wastewater services. The PUC uses that time to investigate and determine what if any of the requested increase is justified.

During the investigation, hearings are held before an Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) in which the evidence in support of the utility is examined and expert witnesses testify. In addition, consumers are offered an opportunity to voice their opinions and give testimony. Briefs may be submitted to the ALJ. Finally, the matter is brought before the PUC Commission for a vote and final decision.

Together with the 60-day notice period, the rate increase process takes about one month.

Hearings and Recommendations

When the PUC investigates a rate increase, it is assigned an ALJ who has authority with respect to administrative law. The ALJ presides at formal hearings, which are open to the public and conducted in a formal court proceeding.

At the formal hearing, the company the PUC is hearing all the information and evidence (USL) and other staff, electric, natural gas, water, sewer and other staff and the Office of Small Business Advocate present their case and are subject to cross-examination. The individual consumers may become formal parties by filing out a formal complaint form. Consumers may speak for themselves, or an attorney may represent individual consumers or groups of consumers. Consumers also can take their case informally by writing or calling the PUC or contacting the ombudsman.

Public input hearings are conducted by the ALJ in the utility's service territory. Consumer testimony becomes part of the record on which the PUC will base its decision.

PA PUC PUBLIC INPUT HEARING TIPS (also in Spanish)



PA PUC PUBLIC INPUT HEARING TIPS

WHAT IS A PUBLIC INPUT HEARING ALL ABOUT?

Public Input Hearings are held as part of the public utility process. The public hearing process offers the opportunity for consumers, local government officials, industry representatives and others to bring their thoughts and concerns regarding utility rates, costs, infrastructure construction and other to the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission (PA PUC).

Public hearing proceedings provide interested parties with the opportunity to discuss and share concerns and expand on issues with the Commission in a public forum. Any person or organization can attend a Public Input Hearing, either to speak to a written testimony submission or simply to observe or listen to the proceedings. An Administrative Law Judge presides over the hearing, and a court reporter transcribes what people who testify say. Public input hearings are fundamental proceedings for Commissioners to reach the soundest judgment and decision as possible.

PA PUC Input Hearings are held telephonically, virtually or in person.

If you have an opinion about a matter for consideration before the Commission, we would like to hear from you!

HELPFUL TIPS ON HOW TO PARTICIPATE IN A PUBLIC INPUT HEARING:

- Come early.
- Try to arrive, call or connect 15 minutes ahead of the hearing time. Arriving, calling or connecting early allows you to hear introductions and get instructions for the hearing proceedings.

Sign in to testify when you arrive - in-person Hearing. The judge will call witnesses to speak from the order they have signed in. Additional sign-up lists will be available throughout the hearing.



PUC COMPLAINT PROCESS & YOUR OPTIONS (also in Spanish)



Know the PUC Complaint Process and Your Options

What Does the PUC Regulate?

The PUC regulates more than 9,000 public utility providers that deliver the following services in Pennsylvania: electric, natural gas, telephone, water and wastewater collection and disposal, steam heat, and transportation of passengers and property by motor coach, truck and taxi.

How Can the PUC Help?

Two types of public utility complaints can be filed with the PUC - an Informal Complaint OR a Formal Complaint. Before filing any complaint with the PUC, consumers should always contact the utility company first to allow an opportunity to resolve the issue.

PUC Complaint Options

- Contacting Your Utility or Company
- Filing an Informal Complaint with the PUC
- Filing a Formal Complaint with the PUC
- Filing Comments on a Proposed Rate Increase with the PUC
- Filing a Formal Complaint to a Proposed Rate Increase with the PUC

PUC Complaint Checklist

- Did you call your utility first to discuss your complaint?
- Are you the utility customer?
- Are you the service and the home with service in your name?
- Do you have legal authority? (Example: Power of Attorney or Legal Guardian)
- Do you have a Protection From Abuse (PFA) Order when filing the complaint?
- Giving the PUC permission to contact the utility to review your account information.
- You still must pay all of your current bills with the utility while your complaint is under review.

What Information Do I Need?

- Your name (account holder) and all required contact information
- Customer account number
- Billing and service address
- Telephone number and fax number (if available)
- The name of the utility company or transportation service provider you have a complaint against
- Clear description of the facts leading to the complaint (you may attach supporting documents)

Note: The same information must be provided by any person representing you.

Informal Complaint Process

Consumers may file Informal Complaints with the PUC's Bureau of Consumer Services (BCS) against PUC-regulated electric, natural gas, telephone and water/wastewater companies, and transportation services, for example, taxis, limousines, household moving companies, trucking companies, transportation network companies or paratransit companies. BCS will investigate the complaint, work with the parties to resolve the complaint and provide the outcome of the investigation to the customer and utility.

The PUC recommends that you use the Informal Complaint process first because many complaints are resolved sooner, are simpler, and take less time to solve compared to Formal Complaints. You also avoid the need for a legal proceeding. Informal Complaints are confidential and not available for public inspection.

To file an Informal Complaint, visit www.puc.pa.gov or call 1-800-692-7380.



OTHER HELPFUL RESOURCES

NEED HELP WITH YOUR ENERGY BILLS? (also in Spanish)



NEED HELP WITH YOUR ENERGY BILLS?



The Public Utility Commission requires utilities to have programs and procedures that help limited-income customers keep their utility service. These programs may help you to pay utility bills or lower the amount of electricity or natural gas you use.

The local electric or natural gas company may call them by different names, but each company has the following programs listed below. Here are some tips to help you stay warm, lower your heating bills, and tell you who to call when you need help.

Budget Billing: All residential customers may contact their electric or natural gas company to request budget billing at any time. This form of billing is based on the customer's past 12 months of energy usage to arrive at a fixed "average" amount to bill each month. The utility company can adjust this average four times a year higher or lower depending on the customer's usage.

Customer Assistance Programs (CAP): This program is set up between the utility company and a limited-income, approved residential customer by your utility. Bills that are based on household size and gross household income. CAP customers agree to make regular monthly payments, which are applied first to the current bill, in exchange for certified utility service.

Customer Assistance Referral and Evaluation Program (CARES): The CARES program will help customers with special needs. Special needs customers are consumers who are experiencing family emergencies, divorce, unemployment, or medical emergencies. The program's goal is to provide support and direction to help customers pay their utility bills.

Low-Income Usage Reduction Program (LURP): LURP helps limited-income residential customers lower the amount of electricity or natural gas used each month. The utility company may provide home weatherization. A utility company representative may come to your home to install energy saving features to help reduce your monthly bill.



ENERGY & UTILITY ASSISTANCE RESOURCES

PAPUC ENERGY & UTILITY ASSISTANCE RESOURCES

The Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission balances the needs of consumers and utilities to ensure safe and reliable utility service at reasonable rates, protects the public interest, educates consumers to make independent and informed utility choices, furthers economic development, and fosters new technologies and competitive markets in an environmentally sound manner.

The Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission's Office of Communications offers an online electric and gas shopping tool for consumers through www.puc.pa.gov and www.pucenergy.com. Both websites allow consumers to enter their ZIP codes to see the competitive offers and prices available in their area. Other features include a Spanish language comparison site, consumer alerts, weekly updates on suppliers and prices, a printable version of the ZIP code searchable supplier list, bid sheets, and tips on ways to save energy. For consumers without internet access, this information can be mailed upon request. PUC bid sheets, brochures, shopping engagements, roundtable discussions and conferences are other successful ways to help consumers shop wisely for utility services or learn about energy assistance programs. These events are conducted by our Senior Communications Specialist, [Quinn Chase](mailto:Quinn.Chase@puc.pa.gov) and [Quinn Williams](mailto:Quinn.Williams@puc.pa.gov).

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For more information or to schedule an educational workshop, seminar, staff training, customer education event, presentation or speaking engagement, please contact our specialists directly.

To find more information on upcoming events, check out the Consumer Education Events Schedule on the PA PUC's website at www.puc.pa.gov

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For informal complaints or termination fees, please contact the PUC's Bureau of Consumer Services (BCS) Toll-Free Hotline at 1-800-692-7380.

Formal Complaint Process Description

