



Office of Consumer Counsel Active at State Legislature

The Office of Consumer Counsel (“OCC”) has been actively participating in the 2015 legislative session, having testified on several measures being proposed by the Energy and Technology Committee.

The OCC is in support of a proposal that would put a cap on the residential fixed customer distribution charge in order to give customers more control over their electric bill as well as give an incentive to participate in energy efficiency measures. The OCC supports a ten dollar cap, and is also amenable to the development of language that establishes and limits the categories of costs recovered in a fixed customer charge. H.B. 5281, *An Act Capping the Fixed Customer Charge for the Residential Customers of Electric Distribution Companies*, was heard on February 24th.

Consumer Counsel Elin Katz testified in support of S.B. 575, *An Act Concerning Electric Rate Transparency*, which would improve the transparency in a rate case and allow for more public comment opportunities. OCC believes that when a rate case is going on, it’s necessary for there to be adequate public comment hearings throughout the company’s service area. Specifically, OCC is requesting at least one public comment hearing in each county within the service area. A key part of a rate case investigation is the customer feedback and testimony on specific issues they are facing.

A second recommendation made by OCC to increase transparency in a rate case is for the utility requesting a rate increase be required to make data publically available. This would solve the problem that arises all too often, when a company claims that its consultants’ work is a proprietary trade secret. While there should be certain protections in place for data like customer information and public safety, the overall transparency needs to increase.

A third bill that’s being considered this session is S.B. 572, *An Act Concerning Gigabit Internet Access*. OCC supports this language, which would increase Connecticut consumers’ access to low-cost, ultra-high-speed gigabit internet networks. This would allow for internet speeds one hundred times faster than the average home internet speed in the United States.

Currently, Gigabit or “Gig” networks are not being developed in the northeast U.S. Unless Connecticut brings Gig access to its citizens, consumers risk being left behind the



advances of the rest of the country. OCC offers a solution that involves community networks and securing private equity partners from across the globe. For more information, click [here](#).

The Energy and Technology Committee will vote at the end of March on which bills to favorably report out of committee. The OCC looks forward to following these particular proposals, staying active in support of them, and working with other parties throughout the legislative session, which ends on June 3rd, 2015.