



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
NEWS RELEASE

Consumer Counsel Elin Swanson Katz

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**CONSUMER COUNSEL ASKS PURA FOR INVESTIGATION INTO ELECTRIC
SUPPLIER'S "MUNICIPAL MARKETING PROGRAM"**

(August 13, 2013 – New Britain) – Consumer Counsel Elin Swanson Katz today asked the state Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA) to open an investigation into Direct Energy Services LLC's "municipal marketing program" following numerous complaints from consumers in the town of Coventry.

In July 2010, Coventry entered into an agreement with Direct Energy – a Connecticut-licensed electric supplier – providing that the town would exclusively recommend the company as a supplier to its residents and the company would supply residents and certain businesses with retail electricity at set preferential rates.

Since then, the Office of Consumer Counsel (OCC) has received consumer complaints indicating that Direct Energy charged rates much higher than stated in the agreement with the town and provided inadequate service when customers sought to access the appropriate rates or express concerns about overcharges.

"Direct Energy's customers in Coventry should receive the price they were promised. From the number of complaints we've received, we're concerned that there was either a deliberate attempt to 'bait and switch' with a higher price, or gross incompetence in administering Direct Energy's contract with Coventry's customers," Consumer Counsel Katz said. "We simply cannot tolerate these kinds of actions in the energy market in Connecticut. Electricity is an essential need and we need to make sure customers are treated fairly and receive the price they are promised. I hope that Direct Energy makes a comprehensive effort to ensure that all customers in Coventry and towns with similar municipal marketing programs are provided a full refund based upon the difference between amounts paid to Direct Energy and contract rates."

In the petition, the Consumer Counsel asks that the investigation cover not only practices in Coventry but also Direct Energy's municipal marketing programs throughout Connecticut to determine whether the issues identified in Coventry are widespread. The petition asks PURA to impose both civil penalties and other appropriate remedial measures, if warranted.

Consumer Counsel Katz has further asked that this matter be investigated separately from another pending PURA investigation opened in July following numerous customer complaints regarding billing, slamming, and quality of service against Direct Energy, as the Consumer Counsel's request involves the company's municipal marketing program.

Attorneys Joseph A. Rosenthal and Lauren A. Henault are assisting the Consumer Counsel with this matter.

Please click [here](#) to view the petition to PURA.

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The Office of Consumer Counsel (OCC) is the State of Connecticut's advocate for all utility ratepayers. OCC seeks to ensure just and reasonable rates and reliable utility service for customers of Connecticut's electric, gas, telephone, and water utilities and reasonable protection for cable television customers. For more information, visit www.ct.gov/occ.