



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

ATTORNEY GENERAL GEORGE JEPSEN

CONSUMER COUNSEL ELIN SWANSON KATZ

**CONSUMER COUNSEL, ATTORNEY GENERAL URGE REGULATORS
TO APPOINT INDEPENDENT UTILITY POLE ADMINISTRATOR**

For immediate release

WEDNESDAY DEC. 7, 2011

HARTFORD – Consumer Counsel Elin Swanson Katz and Attorney General George Jepsen are urging state utility regulators to appoint an independent, statewide administrator with management and oversight authority over Connecticut’s network of utility poles.

The Consumer Counsel and Attorney General made the recommendation in a letter filed Tuesday with the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority. They asked PURA to consider the appointment as part of its ongoing investigation into the responses by Connecticut public service companies to Tropical Storm Irene and the Oct. 29 snow storm.

“We believe that a thorough examination of all the circumstances underlying the widespread damage to the state’s utility infrastructure will reveal that the compromised integrity of the utility poles from neglect and mismanagement contributed to the devastation caused by these two storms, as weakened or rotted utility poles are much more likely to be damaged during extreme weather conditions,” they wrote.

More than 3,000 utility poles fell or were damaged during the two storms. “Unfortunately, many of these utility poles are jointly owned, creating confusion and uncertainty by affected municipalities and other parties as to the entity responsible for repair or replacement of damaged utility poles and their attendant attachments,” the Consumer Counsel and Attorney General wrote.

An administrator, they said, would serve the public interest, provide greater security for Connecticut’s power and telecommunications services and promote economic opportunity by enforcing standards for maintenance and replacement of utility poles; taking responsibility for sharing information on utility poles in preparation for, during and following major storms; coordinating restoration resources; managing completion of temporary repairs and administering an orderly process for pole attachments and reattachments that provides fair and timely access.

“The regulatory and statutory history in Connecticut has already shown us that the current system of pole administration is dysfunctional and has contributed to many prior delays in establishment, repair and restoration of utility and communication service. Given that history and

recent events, it is evident that a more responsive management system for the public rights of way is urgently needed,” the Consumer Counsel and Attorney General wrote.

###

CONTACT:

Attorney General: *Susan E. Kinsman*, susan.kinsman@ct.gov; 860-808-5324; 860-478-9581 (cell)
Facebook.com/AGGeorgeJepsen; Twitter.com/AGJepsen;

Consumer Counsel *Elin Swanson Katz*, elin.katz@ct.gov; 860-827-2910.