



Consumer Counsel Katz Joins National Dialogue on the Future of the Electric Grid

Summer has been busy at the OCC, with Consumer Counsel Elin Swanson Katz speaking at two different events in Washington, D.C., that contemplated the challenges and opportunities for the national electric grid, and debated what changes are needed in the regulatory framework to enable the “grid of the future.”

On Thursday, June 26, 2014, Consumer Counsel Katz took part in a National Summit sponsored by the US Department of Energy (DOE) and the Gridwise Alliance on the “Future of the Grid -- Evolving to Meet America’s Needs.” At the invite-only Summit, Katz, the only consumer advocate presenting at the event, represented the consumer perspective on a panel targeting the “Evolution of the Regulatory Model.” The panel was moderated by Ron Binz of Public Policy Consulting, the former chair of the Colorado Public Utilities Commission. Katz’s fellow panelists were Philip Moeller, Commissioner, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC); Joseph Rigby, President & CEO, PEPCO; and Lorraine Akiba, Commissioner, Hawaii Public Utilities Commission.

“It was a very interesting and engaging dialogue,” Katz reported. “I appreciate that the advocate community was invited to present the consumer perspective during the Summit, and I was honored to represent the interests of consumers across the nation in this important dialogue.”

Shortly after that event, Consumer Counsel Katz participated in a July 9 workshop with a national focus co-hosted by the Electric Power Research Institute (EPRI) and the Edison Electric Institute (EEl) on the “Role of the Electric Distribution System in an Integrated Grid.” Katz was again the only public advocate invited as a panelist, and spoke on the topic, “A New Paradigm for Electricity Distribution: The Forces for Change.” Moderated by EEl’s Rich Tempchin, the panel also included Mike Rowand of Duke Energy, Carl Pechman of DOE, Val Jensen of ComEd, and DC Public Service Commission Chair Betty Ann Kane.

“It’s very positive to see the utility business community reach out to the advocates,” Katz reported. “As we plan for the changes we expect to see in our energy systems, we need to consider the needs and desires of the consumer of the future. Being part of this conversation helps bring that perspective to the table.”



Both events featured a lively back-and-forth between various stakeholders with debate on cutting-edge issues around the electric grid.

“While we can’t fully anticipate what the future will bring for the grid, we need to do our best to integrate the changes we do see coming, and design an energy system that can adapt to evolving conditions, as we are in a time of unprecedented change in this industry. The consumer of the future will not be ‘one size fits all.’ There will be a variety of needs and wants, just as we see today. We need to keep that in mind as we implement policy changes and integrate new technology into the system,” Katz said. “Events like these help us develop a collective vision of the future and a framework for addressing change.”