



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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LEGISLATURE PASSES STORM STANDARDS BILL;
OCC GIVEN BROADER MISSION

In the legislative session that ended May 9th, the Legislature passed only one major utility-related bill. SB 23, entitled "An Act Enhancing Emergency Preparedness and Response," addresses the key issue of improving Connecticut's preparation and response to major storms.

Among other things, the bill requires the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority ("PURA") to establish performance standards for electric and gas utility companies to follow during storm restoration. Specifically, utilities must identify tree trimming and utility system "hardening" necessary to minimize service outages. After a major storm or other emergency, the utility's performance will be judged in accordance with the standards developed, and penalties can be issued for violations. PURA will also develop standards for restoration of telecommunications service.

The bill passed unanimously in both the House and Senate, and was actively supported by Governor Malloy, who has already stated that he will sign it.

The Office of Consumer Counsel ("OCC") is pleased to note that the language of this legislation changes its statutory mission to clarify that OCC's role includes advocating for reliable service and adequate utility infrastructure. Although already taking such issues into account, OCC is encouraged that the Legislature has expressly charged it with these additional responsibilities. OCC hopes one day to be able to expand its office in order to advocate even more effectively under this comprehensive statutory charge.

Consumer Counsel Elin Katz said "We are pleased that the Governor and the Legislature have supported our office, and in fact broadened our mission to advocate for Connecticut's citizens, businesses, cities and towns. We look forward to serving the state and its residents in this expanded role."

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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.