

**DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA GOVERNMENT
ADVISORY NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSION 5D, SINGLE MEMBER DISTRICT 5D05**



Commissioner Kathy Henderson, 5D05
Testimony/Talking Points Regarding DC OPC FY 2016 Budget

The Office of the People's Counsel is a critically important agency that helps to regulate a good quality of life for District residents. When consumers have complaints OPC staff are able to efficiently record, investigate and resolve consumer complaints against utility companies within a relatively short amount of time. This can mean the difference between lights or no lights or no gas or phone service. In 2014, OPC efficiently addressed approximately 1000 consumer inquiries and resolved at least 25.

- 1) OPC's Budget is paid for by a surcharge on ratepayers, not DC Govt. tax revenue
- 2) The FY 2016 proposed budget for the Office of the People's Counsel is \$7.39 million which represents a 7.0 percent increase over OPC's FY 2015 budget of \$6.91 million. The increase reflects across the board budget priorities set by the Executive Office of the Mayor.
- 3) OPC's budget supports adequate representation of Consumers' interest on key issues such as the Exelon Pepco Merger, the DC Power Line Undergrounding effort and the Washington Gas Pipeline Replacement project.
- 4) OPC's budget supports the ability for consumers who choose to participate in the regulatory process to have highly qualified technical and legal help in matters of rates and services.
- 5) OPC's budget permits the Office to directly support individual Consumers with Complaints or concerns about utility services. In 2014 there were more than 2500 complaints and over 1000 inquiries responded to by the Office of the People's Counsel (OPC).
- 6) Changes occurring in the utility field such as increasing competition among energy and energy service providers, and the desire to bring renewable energy technology to the District will place new consumer demands for information and education on OPC.
- 7) OPC's work to extend the benefits of energy efficiency and renewable technology to multi-family buildings and large non-commercial users offers tremendous savings potential for a large portion of the DC rate-paying community that previously has not shared in the benefits of these new offerings.
- 8) OPC has saved Ratepayers an estimated \$1 Billion dollars in rate increases since 1975.

9) OPC's budget supports consumer complaints resolution process (e.g. Competitive Energy Suppliers (CES) deceptive marketing practices; complaints trend identified by staff; OPC petitioned PSC to investigate; settlement with one CES; regulations regarding CES marketing practices to be reviewed)

10) OPC's budget sustains consumer education about DC's dynamic utility markets (e.g. proposed Exelon acquisition of Pepco; DDOT/Pepco undergrounding project)

11) OPC's budget supports efforts to maintain affordable rates and service reliability (e.g. rate case representation; quality of service town hall meetings)

12) OPC's budget supports implementation of renewable energy generally through its energy efficiency and sustainability consumer education outreach program

13) The issues of; the Exelon/Pepco acquisition, Power Line Undergrounding project, WGL pipeline replacement, Verizon's copper to fiber transition (and possible transition to wireless), Pepco billing, rates and smart meter concerns, Competitive Energy Supplier marketing and quality of services, continued growth of renewable energy sources and consumer complaints resolution are not going away. In the rate-payer community we expect to make great demands on OPC staff to represent rate-payers in Public Service Commission (PSC) proceedings, come out to the community to educate consumers about changes taking place in the District's dynamic utility market and to assist in resolving increasingly complex utility complaints in **the coming year. THE FY 2016 budget should provide OPC with the resources to meet our expectations.**

Thank you for accepting my testimony as part of the official record.

Respectfully Submitted By

Kathy Henderson

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