

# **NARUC-Nigeria Regulatory Partnership**

**October 8-12, 2012**



# Consumer Education & Outreach to Residential Utility Consumers in the District of Columbia



**Public Service Commission of the District of Columbia**



## **Kellie Armstead Media Relations Specialist**







# Overview of District of Columbia Public Service Commission

- The Public Service Commission of the District of Columbia (PSC) was created by Congress in 1913. It now regulates natural gas, electric, and local telephone common carriers.
- In 2013, the PSC will celebrate its Centennial Anniversary.



# Mission Statement

The mission of the District of Columbia Public Service Commission is to serve the public interest by ensuring that financially healthy electric, natural gas and telecommunications companies provide safe, reliable and quality utility services at reasonable rates for District of Columbia residential, business and government customers.

We do this by:

- Motivating customers– and results–oriented employees;
- Protecting consumers to ensure public safety, reliability, and quality services;
- Regulating monopoly services to ensure their rates are just and reasonable;
- Fostering fair and open competition among service providers;
- Conserving natural resources and preserving environmental quality;
- Resolving disputes among consumers and service providers; and
- Educating consumers and informing the public.



# Who We Are



**VACANT**



**Betty Ann Kane  
Chairman**



**Joanne Doddy Fort  
Commissioner**

**The Chairman and two Commissioners are appointed by the Mayor with the advice and consent of the D.C. Council (Legislature).  
Currently, there is a vacant Commissioner position.**



# Who We Are



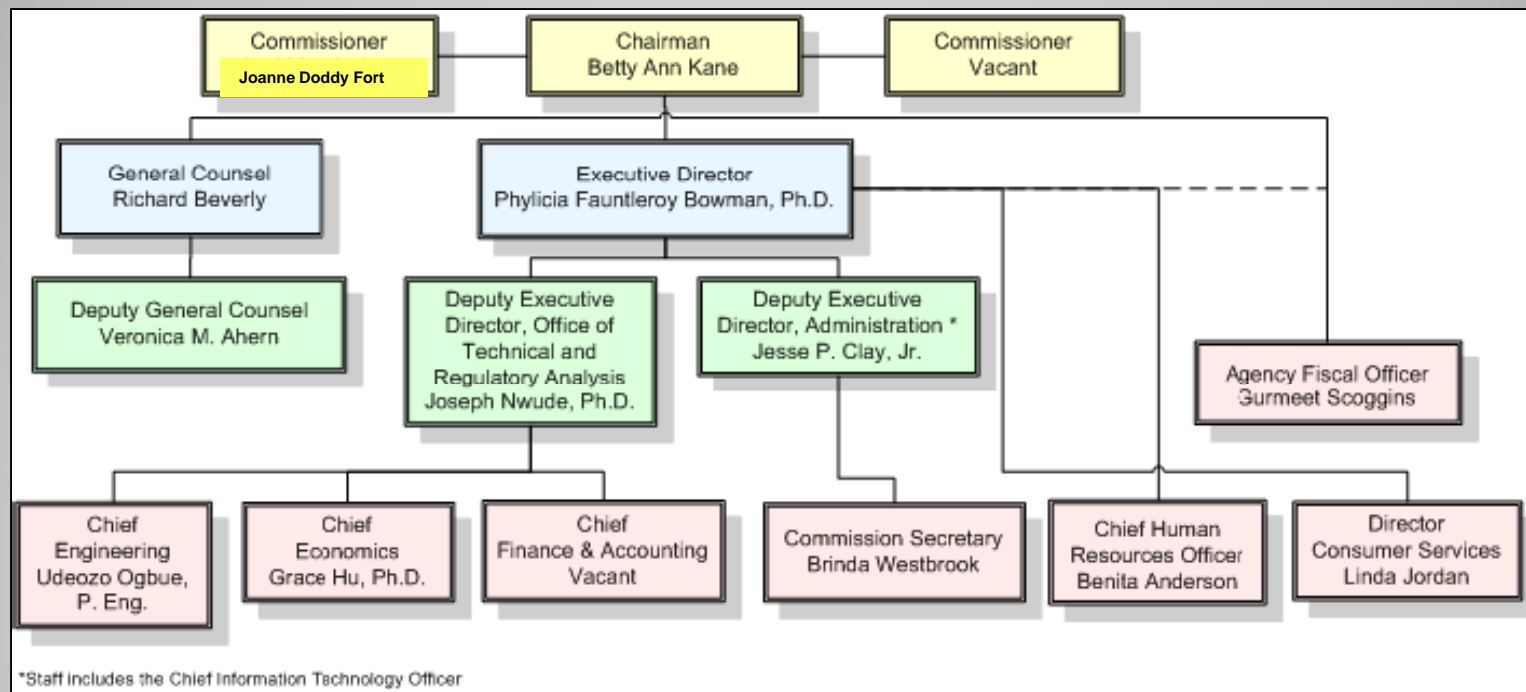
**The PSC Staff consists of 73 attorneys, engineers, economists, consumer specialists, and administrative support personnel.**





# Who We Are

The PSC has six key offices to accomplish our mission.



## What We Do

The PSC serves residential, business, & government customers through **Public Safety**, **Utility Regulation**, and **Consumer Education**.

The PSC tracks and analyzes energy and local telephone prices & activities, monitors compliance, conducts investigations, and enforces the Commission's rules and procedures.



# Role of Regulators

## Consumer Protections

The PSC is responsible for protecting consumers and resolving disputes among consumers and utility service providers. To do this, there are several consumer protections in place to assist consumers.

**Rulemakings,  
Monitoring, &  
Enforcement**

**Refereed  
Meter Tests**



**Consumer Bill  
of Rights**

**Consumer  
Complaint  
Mediation Process**



# Office of Consumer Services

The Office of Consumer Services (OCS) is responsible for the consumer complaint mediation process, consumer education & outreach, and managing the outdoor pay telephone program. OCS also serves as the public relations arms of the PSC.



# Resolving disputes among consumers and service providers

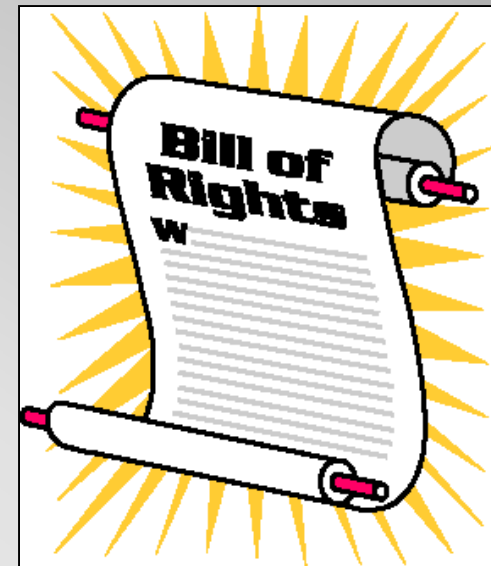
- Consumer Bill of Rights
- Consumer Complaint Mediation Process
  - Intake
  - Consumer Complaint Database
  - Refereed Meter Tests
  - Informal Hearings
  - Formal Hearings
  - Appeals Process
- Major Types of Complaints and Inquiries





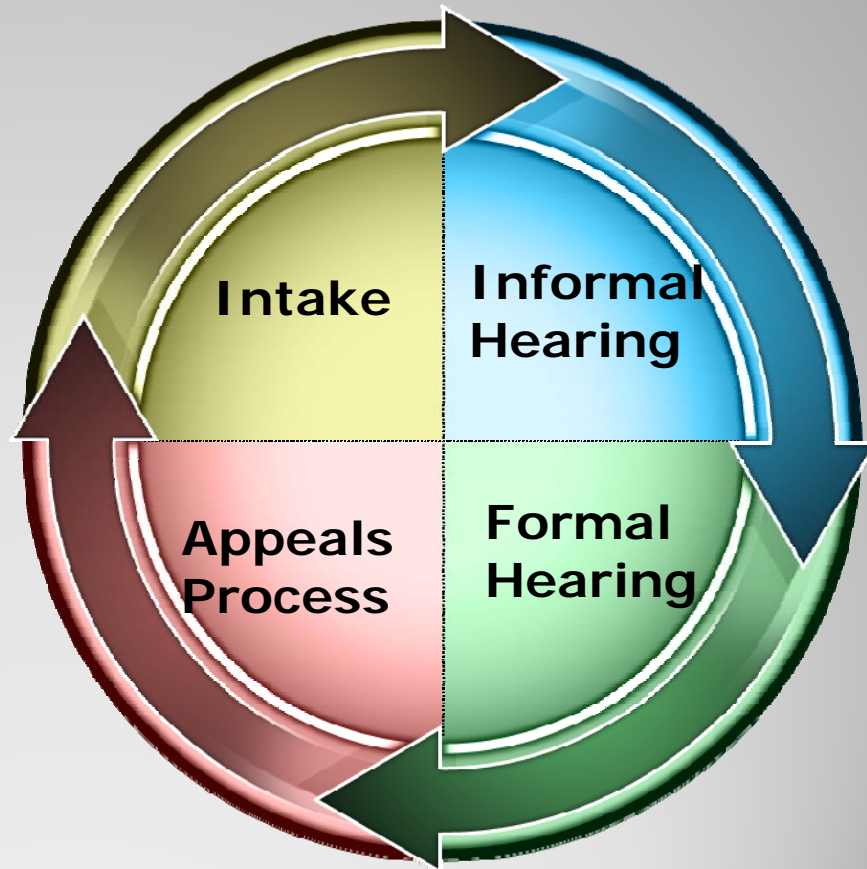
# Consumer Bill of Rights

- The PSC adopted a Consumer Bill of Rights (CBOR) in 1979 to protect utility consumers' interests.
- The CBOR established uniform rules and policies to govern the conduct and practices of the three utility companies, The Chesapeake and Potomac Telephone Company (C&P) now Verizon, Potomac Electricity Power Company (Pepco), and Washington Gas, that provided service to District consumers.
- The PSC revised the CBOR in 2009 to cover not only the three utility companies, but also the Competitive Local Exchange Carriers (CLECs) and alternative electric and natural gas suppliers that now serve the District.



# Consumer Complaint Mediation Process

Consumers may contact OCS for mediation of their utility service complaints. A Consumer Specialist (CS) will provide complaint handling services to District residents and businesses to help resolve their complaints with their utility service provider.



# Consumer Complaint Mediation Process

## Informal Mediation

**Intake**

**Acknowledgement**

**Investigation**

**Resolution**

**The CBOR establishes the steps and timeline for the consumer complaint mediation process. 99% of complaints are resolved through informal mediation.**



# Consumer Complaint Mediation Process

## Intake & Investigate

- Consumers can send questions or file a complaint about a utility service provider to OCS.
- A Consumer Specialist (CS) responds to inquiries and investigates complaints by contacting the appropriate utility provider on behalf of the consumers to assist in resolving their issues.



# Consumer Complaint Mediation Process

## Consumer Complaint Database

OCS launched its database in 2010.

•The benefits include:

- Uniformity of data and efficient record-keeping;
- Tracks complaints and inquiries;
- Records events
- Ability to record conversational notes;
- Automatically generates complaint ID numbers
- Provides forms for emails and letters;
- Ability to upload documents within case
- Schedules and records results of meter tests and inspections
- Generates reports





## Manage Complaints

Actions ▾

Log Complaint

[Hide form](#)

**Intake: Logging a complaint or inquiry.**

Look-Up (Step 1 of 3)

Consumer (Step 2 of 3)

Complaint (Step 3 of 3)

### Pre-Checks

Does consumer have a pending complaint with OPC?  
☐ Yes  
☒ No  
If Yes, Complaint will not be recorded

Has Consumer contacted the Utility?  
☒ Yes  
☐ No  
Specify whether the consumer has contacted the utility

Do I have your permission to contact service provider to review and discuss your personal account information?

☒ Yes  
☐ No  
If No, Complaint will not be recorded

Date

9/21/2010

Enter Date

Initials

Enter Initials

### Look-Up Consumer

Business Type

- ☒ Electric Companies  
☐ Alternative Electric Suppliers  
☐ Gas Companies  
☐ Alternative Gas Suppliers  
☐ Telecom Companies  
☐ Competitive Local Exchange Carriers  
☐ Inter Exchange Carriers

Select business type

Company

Pepco ▾

Select company

Account Number

Enter account number

Consumer Name

Enter consumer name

Next



[Log Complaint](#)

Look-Up (Step 1 of 3)

Consumer (Step 2 of 3)

Complaint (Step 3 of 3)

Company Name : Pepco | Company Type : Electric Companies | Industry : Electric

## Intake: Gathering consumer details.

### Consumer Details

Account Number

7675

Consumer account number

Title

Mr

Consumer salutation

Name

Name of the consumer

Contact Name

Contact name of consumer

Business Name

Business name of consumer

Home Phone

Enter in the format of (000) 000-0000

Cell Number

Enter in the format of (000) 000-0000

Work Phone

Enter in the format of (000) 000-0000

Email Notification

☐ Yes

☒ No

Consumer wants email notification alert

### Service Address

Street

Service address of consumer

APT/Suite#

Apt/suite# of consumer

State

District of Columbia (DC)

State of consumer

Region

NA

Region of consumer

City

Washington

City of consumer

Zip

Zipcode of consumer

Ward

NA

Ward of consumer

### Mailing Address

Street

Mailing address of consumer

APT/Suite#

Apt/suite# of consumer

State

District of Columbia (DC)

State of consumer

Region

NA

Region of consumer

City

Washington

City of consumer

Zip

Zipcode of consumer

Ward

NA

Ward of consumer

☐ Keep Mailing Address same as Service Address

Click if service address is mail address

Next



Log Complaint

Hide form

Look-Up (Step 1 of 3)

Consumer (Step 2 of 3)

Complaint (Step 3 of 3)

Complaint

Consumer Details

Source

Origin\*

- ☐ Call
- ☐ Walk-in
- ☐ Letter
- ☐ Email
- ☐ Facsimile
- ☐ Website
- ☐ EOM
- ☐ Other

The source of the complaint received.

Event

None

Please specify associated event if any

From:\*

- ☐ Consumer
- ☐ Agency Referral
- ☐ Public Official Referral
- ☐ Council
- ☐ Chair
- ☐ Commissioners

From whom the complaint received.

Native Language\*

- ☒ English
- ☐ Spanish
- ☐ Other

Native language of the consumer.

Complaint Type\*

- ☒ Billing and Payment
  - ☐ Quality of Service
  - ☐ Others
- Choose a type of a complaint.

Billing and Payment Issue

- ☐ Billing
- ☐ Cramming
- ☐ Deposit
- ☐ Disconnect Notice
- ☒ High Bill
- ☐ Local Charges
- ☐ Payment Arrangements
- ☐ Service Termination
- ☐ Slamming
- ☐ Tax , Surcharge
- ☐ Other

Billing and Payment Issue

Received Date:\*

9/21/2010

The Received date of the complaint.

Amount Disputed(\$):

The disputed amount raised by the consumer.

Assignee\*

\*Administrator

Enter assignee name

Description\*

Details about the complaint.

Log Complaint

**Intake: Gathering details about the complaint.**



## All Complaints

<div> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> </div>										
<div> From <input type="text" value="All"/> Type <input type="text" value="All"/> Due In <input type="text" value="All"/> Year <input type="text" value="All"/> Status <input type="text" value="All"/> Industry <input type="text" value="All"/> </div>										
<input type="checkbox"/>	ID	From	Consumer Name	Service Address	Consumer Specialist	Status	Duration	Due In (Days)	Industry	Flag
<input type="checkbox"/>	★ 110	Consumer	Ram		Administrator	Closed	5	11	Electric	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	★ 112	Public Official Referral			Administrator	Logged	5	11	Electric	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	★ 116	Consumer	Michael		Administrator	Response to Formal received from Utility	3	13	Gas	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	★ 117	Public Official Referral	Faria Consumer	Service Address Street	Administrator	Logged	2	14	Electric	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	★ 118	Public Official Referral	jgijgh	hgfhghghghgh	Administrator	Logged	2	14	Electric	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	★ 119	Public Official Referral	John Mitchel	Mercidees Valley Street	Administrator	Logged	2	14	Gas	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	★ 121	Public Official Referral	Karim		Administrator	Closed	34	14	Telecom	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	★ 129	Consumer	Mani	Maroon St	Administrator	Logged	1	15	Electric	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	★ 130	Consumer	Roger Moore	Raheja Towers	Administrator	Formal Request Received from Consumer	1	15	Electric	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	★ 131	Consumer	John	Francis	Administrator	Logged	1	15	Electric	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

**Intake: Complaints are logged and added to the queue for management.**





Complaint : 188

Actions

Record Informal Process Informal Hearing Initiate Formal Formal Process Closure

**All Complaints**

1.Update 2.Delete 3.Close 4.Update Consumer Details

1. Informal Process 2. Informal Hearing 3. Initiate Formal 4. Formal Process 5. Docket Case

**CONSUMER**Name: **Edward Loga** | Language: English | Contact: 122225 | Mobile:  
E-Mail : msmith@psc.dc.gov**COMPLAINT**ID: **188** | Type: **Billing and Payment** | Sub-Type: **Billing** |  
Amount: Disputed(\$) | Saved(\$) 0Origin: Call | From: **Consumer** | Specialist: **maurice.smith** | Status: **Logged**

Description: Consumer requests high bill investigation

**SERVICE**Account No: 1255966687 | Provider: **Pepco** | Type: Electric Companies | Industry: **Electric****ADDRESS**Service: 4848 green Neadow Apt/Suite Washington District of Columbia (DC) SE 20011 Ward 1  
Mailing: Apt/Suite Washington District of Columbia (DC) NA NA**RESOLUTION PROGRESS**

17%

**INFORMAL PROCESS****INFORMAL HEARING**

EVAL:Function length: A null parameter has been passed to the function (types Number (Integer) in parameter position(s) 1); please check that the function's inputs are valid.

**Documents**

Complaint\_188

Created by **maurice.smith**. You have administrative access.

New Folder Upload

<input type="checkbox"/>	Name	Type	Size	Created By	Modified	Version
<input type="checkbox"/>	★ Incoming		0 file(s)	Maurice Smith	Sep 17, 2010 11:50 AM	
<input type="checkbox"/>	★ Outgoing		0 file(s)	Maurice Smith	Sep 17, 2010 11:50 AM	

**Log Conversation**

Date	Call Attended By	Summary
------	------------------	---------

No results

**Request Meter Test**

<input type="checkbox"/>	ID	Consumer	Type	Scheduled Date	Status	Requested By	Received On	Conducted On	Company Name
--------------------------	----	----------	------	----------------	--------	--------------	-------------	--------------	--------------

No results

**Due Dates**Received : **9/17/2010** Closed :**Informal Process**Submitted :  
Utility Response Due :  
Utility Responded :  
Consumer Notified :**Informal Hearing**Scheduled :  
Conducted :**Formal Process**Requested :  
Consumer Due :  
Received :  
Submitted to Utility:  
Utility Response Due :  
Response Received :**Ack Letter** **Intake Form** **Reminder Letter****Generated Documents**

**Investigation: Complaints are updated with information during the investigation.**





The database  
has the ability to  
generate letters  
to send out to  
consumers.

Public Service Commission of the District of Columbia  
1333 H Street, NW 6<sup>th</sup> Floor, East Tower  
Washington, DC 20005  
Phone (202) 626-5120 Fax (202) 626-9210  
[www.dcpSC.org](http://www.dcpSC.org)

September 21, 2010

Jack Smith  
James Street, SE  
Washington, DC 20018

RE: Pepco Energy Svcs

Dear Jack Smith:

This is to acknowledge receipt of your correspon regarding Pepco Energy Svcs. Your complaint will be investigated by Mr. A. Smith, a Manager in the Office of Consumer Services at the District of Columbia Public Service Commission ("Commission"). Mr. Smith will contact you directly within two to three business days.

Thank you for contacting the Commission with your issue. Most complaints are resolved within fourteen (14) business days; however, complicated cases may require additional time. If you have questions in the interim, please do not hesitate to contact Mr. Smith at (202) 626-9210.

Sincerely Yours,

– Administrator  
None  
Office of Consumer Services

Ack Letter | Intake Form | Reminder Letter  
▲ Hide Form

Details

Title Mr ▼ Choose a salutation	Assignee "Alex Smith" Assignee Name
--------------------------------------	---

Note: Click the **Submit** button to generate the **Acknowledgement Letter**. To see the generated letter, please open the document folder by clicking on it.

Submit





## Resolved Complaint

[Home](#)
[Complaints](#)
[Inquiries](#)
[Meter Tests](#)
[Master Meter Removals](#)
[Advanced](#)
[Dashboard](#)

### Complaint : 3342

Record

Informal Process

Informal Hearing

Initiate Formal

Formal Process

Closure

[All Complaints](#)
[1.Update](#) | [2.Delete](#) | [3.Close](#) | [4.Update Consumer Details](#)
[1. Informal Process](#) | [2. Informal Hearing](#) | [3. Initiate Formal](#) | [4. Formal Process](#) | [5. Docket Case](#)

#### CONSUMER

 Name: | Language: English | Contact: | Mobile:  
 E-Mail :

#### COMPLAINT

 ID: **3342** | Type: **Others** | Sub-Type: **Other** |  
 Amount: Disputed(\$) | Saved(\$)

 Origin: Walk-in | From: **Consumer** | Specialist: **karen.nurse** | Status: **Closed**

Description: Consumer walked in to complain that he requested Comcast as his provider and want to port his landline telephone service over to Comcast and he informed both companies of his request. Per consumer Verizon continued to charge him and provide him with service eventhough he was a Comcast customer. Comcast provided him with landline service, but the service did not come to his house and Comcast never gave him the number.

Event: **None**

#### SERVICE

 Account No: | Provider: **Verizon** | Type: Telecom Companies | Industry: **Telecom**

#### ADDRESS

 Service: 1464 Belmont Street Apt/Suite Washington District of Columbia (DC) NW 20009 Ward 1  
 Mailing: 1464 Belmont Street Apt/Suite Washington District of Columbia (DC) NW 20009 Ward 1

#### RESOLUTION PROGRESS

100%

#### Due Dates

 Received : **10/2/2012** Closed : 10/2/2012 in 1 Day (s)

#### Informal Process

 Submitted :  
 Utility Response Due :  
 Utility Responded :  
 Consumer Notified :

#### Informal Hearing

 Scheduled :  
 Conducted :

#### Formal Process

 Requested :  
 Consumer Due :  
 Received :  
 Submitted to Utility:  
 Utility Response Due :  
 Response Received :

[Ack Letter](#) | [Intake Form](#) | [Reminder Letter](#)

#### Generated Documents





## Unresolved Complaint

Complaint : 3348

Record

Informal Process

Informal Hearing

Initiate Formal

Formal Process

Closure

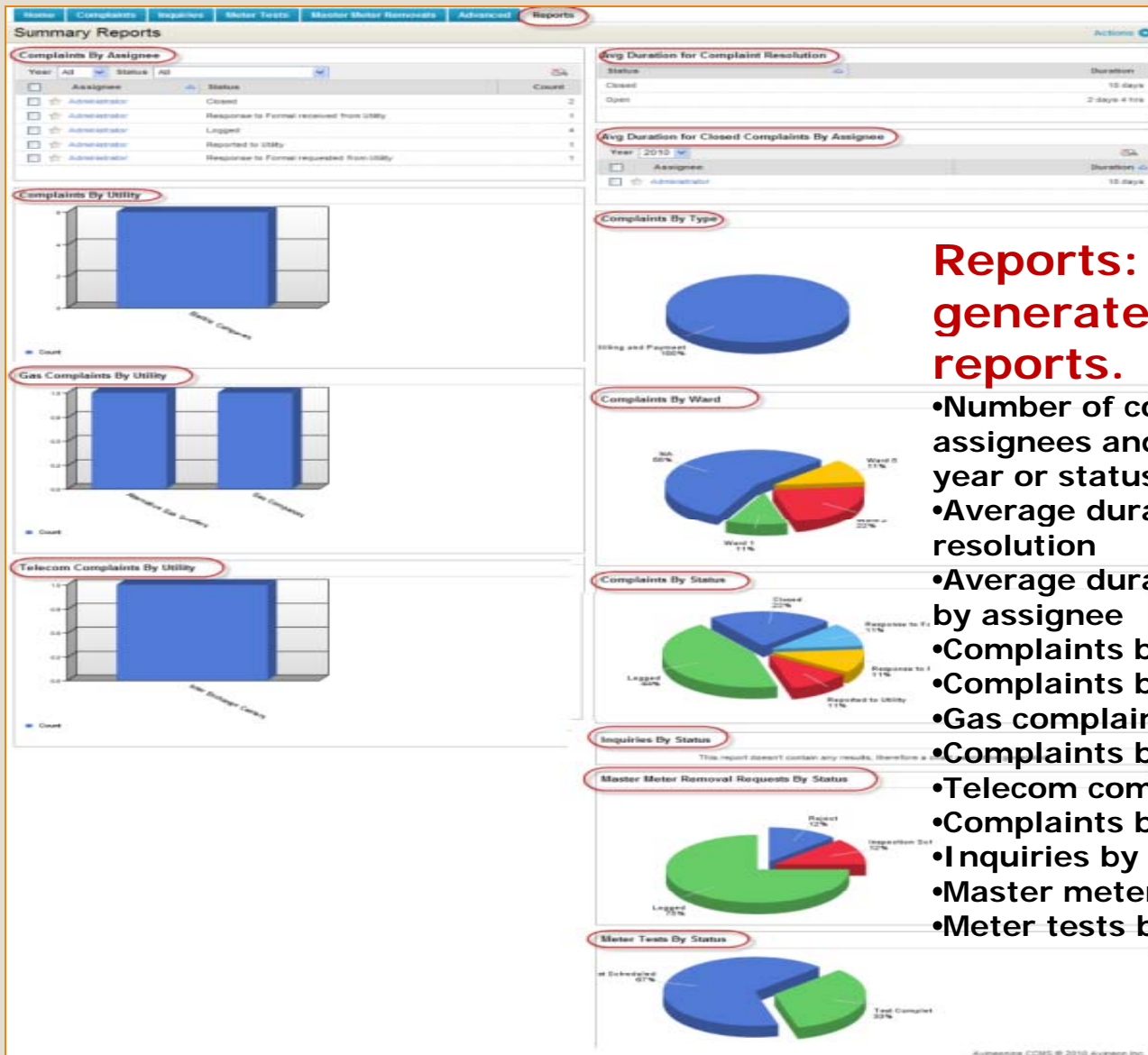
[All Complaints](#)[1.Update](#) | [2.Delete](#) | [3.Close](#) | [4.Update Consumer Details](#)[1. Informal Process](#) | [2. Informal Hearing](#) | [3. Initiate Formal](#) | [4. Formal Process](#) | [5. Docket Case](#)**CONSUMER**Name: **Brenda Bryant** | Language: English | Contact: | Mobile:  
E-Mail :**COMPLAINT**ID: **3348** | Type: **Quality of Service** | Sub-Type: **Downed wire** |  
Amount: Disputed(\$) | Saved(\$) 0Origin: Email | From: **Public Official Referral** | Specialist: **maurice.smith** | Status: **Reported to utility**

Description: Report of a downed wire in the 1000 block of Eye Street, NE.

Event: **None****SERVICE**Account No: | Provider: **Pepco** | Type: Electric Companies | Industry: **Electric****ADDRESS**Service: 1000 Eye Street Apt/Suite Washington District of Columbia (DC) NE None  
Mailing: 1000 Eye Street Apt/Suite Washington District of Columbia (DC) NE None**RESOLUTION PROGRESS**

34%

**Due Dates**Received : **10/2/2012** Closed :**Informal Process**Submitted : **10/2/2012**  
Utility Response Due : **10/22/2012**  
Utility Responded :  
Consumer Notified :**Informal Hearing**Scheduled :  
Conducted :**Formal Process**Requested :  
Consumer Due :  
Received :  
Submitted to Utility:  
Utility Response Due :  
Response Received :[Ack Letter](#) | [Intake Form](#) | [Reminder Letter](#)**Generated Documents**



## Reports: The database can generate various types of reports.

- Number of complaints lodged by assignees and their complaints filtered by year or status
- Average duration for complaint resolution
- Average duration for closed complaints by assignee
- Complaints by utility
- Complaints by type
- Gas complaints by utility
- Complaints by ward
- Telecom complaints by utility
- Complaints by status
- Inquiries by status
- Master meter removal requests by status
- Meter tests by status



# Consumer Complaint Mediation Process

## Refereed Electric and Natural Gas Meter Test

- Consumers may request a meter test if they believe the meter is inaccurately recording usage.



- The utility company will send a technician and a customer service representative to the test.
- The PSC will send a representative from OCS and an engineer from the Office of Technical & Regulatory Analysis (OTRA). The engineer will witness the meter test and certify the accuracy of the results.
- Most meter tests are associated with high bill complaints. OCS will answer questions from the consumers and help identify ways to save energy.





# Consumer Complaint Mediation Process

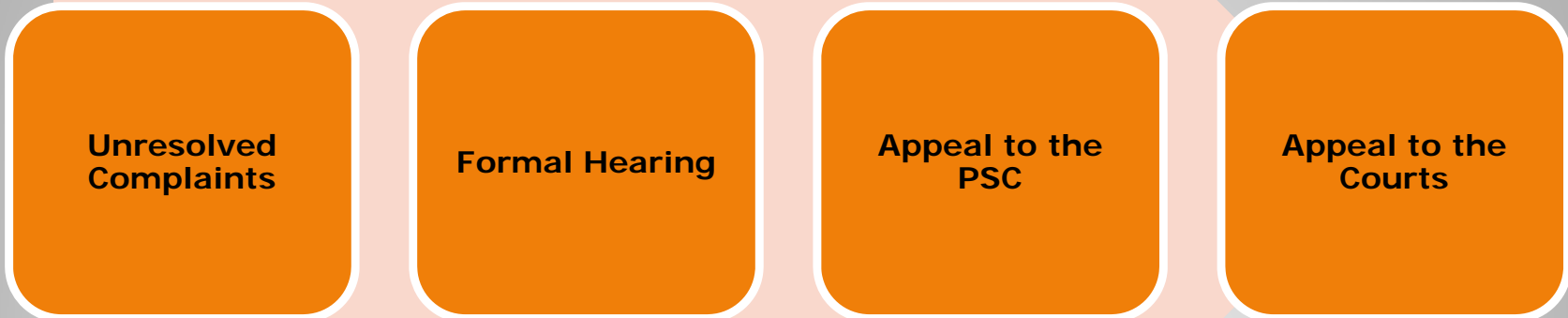
## Informal Consumer Complaint Hearing

- If a Consumer is dissatisfied with the results of the investigation, OCS will arrange an informal hearing between the consumer and representatives from the utility company.
- The consumer can ask the Office of the People's Counsel (OPC) to attend the informal hearing as an observer or as the lawyer for the consumer at the hearing.
- During the informal hearing, OCS allows each party to state its case and OCS attempts to facilitate an agreement between the consumer and the utility service provider.



# Consumer Complaint Mediation Process

## Formal Mediation



**A very small number of complaints  
progress to a formal hearing.**



# Consumer Complaint Mediation Process

## Formal Consumer Complaint Hearing

- If the complaint is not resolved through an informal hearing, the consumer can request, in writing, a formal hearing.
- OCS has the formal hearing request docketed by the Office of the Commission Secretary. A PSC attorney serves as the hearing officer. OPC can attend the formal hearing as an observer or as the lawyer for the Consumer.
- The PSC engages a court reporter to provide an official transcript of the formal hearing. The hearing officer subsequently renders a decision in an order.



# Consumer Complaint Mediation Process

## Appealing the Formal Hearing Decision



- Any party that disagrees with the hearing officer's decision can appeal the decision to the Commissioners.
- Another PSC attorney then serves as the advisor to the Commissioners. The PSC issues its decision in an order.
- Any party that is not satisfied with the PSC's decision can appeal the decision to the D.C. Court of Appeals.



# Consumer Complaint Mediation Process

## Major Types of Complaints & Inquiries

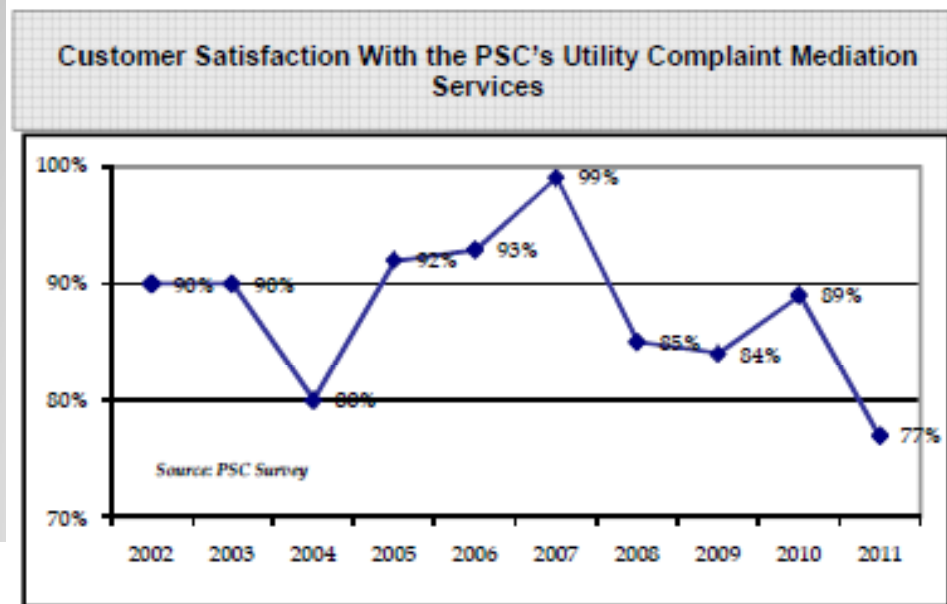
- Billing (High Bill, Erroneous Bills, Slamming)
- Service Disconnections
- Reliability (Power Outages and Timely Restoration of Services)



# Consumer Complaint Mediation Process

## Customer Feedback

OCS sends out Consumer Satisfaction Surveys each quarter to gain feedback from consumers on how to improve procedures and customer service.



The PSC's Office of Consumer Services distributes customer service satisfaction forms to all complainants. In 2011, in response to the survey, 77% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that they would contact the PSC again to resolve a question or a problem. This figure was well below the 89% for the previous year.





# Consumer Satisfaction Survey

Dear Consumer:

The Office of Consumer Services ("OCS") recently assisted you in resolving an electric, natural gas or telecommunications complaint or inquiry.

As a part of our on-going efforts to improve our internal process and to provide high quality service to the residents of the District of Columbia, we continuously measure our performance. In order to do this, we need feedback from YOU.

Please take a moment to complete our Consumer Satisfaction Survey and return it to us. All you have to do is seal the survey and place it in the mail. Postage is already paid. Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,  
*Linda Jordan*

Director  
Office of Consumer Services



How do you rate us?	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	No Opinion
The OCS staff treats me with courtesy and respect.				
The information from OCS staff is clear and understandable.				
The OCS staff shows concern about my problem and willing to assist me.				
The OCS staff returns my calls in a timely manner while the complaint is under investigation.				
OCS resolved the issue to my satisfaction.				
I understand the outcome even though I do not agree with the result.				
I will contact the Commission again to resolve a question or problem.				



Tear Off & Mail Survey Back



## Consumer Satisfaction Survey

Demographics:  
This information is for statistical purposes only.  
(Optional)

What is your ward? \_\_\_\_\_

What is your gender? Male \_\_\_\_\_  
Female \_\_\_\_\_

What is your age range?  
Circle one.

18 to 30    31 to 40

41 to 50    51 to 60

61 to 70    70+

Additional Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Name, Address, Phone Number (Optional): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for your help!

# Consumer Complaint Mediation Process

## Evaluation

The feedback from the surveys has led to:

- Cross training of staff
- Promoting teamwork and collaboration among offices
- OCS also follow-ups with unsatisfied consumers to resolve any outstanding issues.



# Educating Consumers & Informing the Public

- Communications Plan
- Consumer Outreach Program
  - Types of Outreaches
  - Tools
- Media Relations



# Importance of a Communications Plan

## **What is a Communications Plan?**

- It is a written document that describes what an organization wants to accomplish.

## **A Communications Plan should encompass:**

- What the organization will accomplish (goals, objectives, and strategies)
- Whom the organization will address (target audience)
- How to accomplish objectives (the tools and timetable)
- How to measure the effectiveness of the plan (evaluation)

A communications plan integrates public relations, advertising, online, social media, etc; and other communications elements into one cohesive entity, all sharing the same message.





# Importance of a Communications Plan

## Why create a Communications Plan?

- Focuses your daily work
- Helps to plan and set priorities
- Creates a unified and shared message for the organization
- Promotes collaboration among offices
- Garnerers organizational support for a goals

The best time to develop a communications plan is in conjunction with the annual budgeting or organizational planning process.

There are also communications plans for different initiatives.



# Importance of a Communications Plan

## #1: Determine the Goals

Develop messages based upon the goals of the organization and needs of the consumer. To do this, conduct an audit to find out what has been accomplished and what was effective by:

- Interviewing Commissioners and Directors to determine their priorities,
- Talking to staff about formal cases, major issues, or new initiatives, and
- Reviewing consumer participation in programs.





# Importance of a Communications Plan

## #2: Determine the Target Audience

List all the audiences that the organization might contact, attempt to influence, or serve. Included on the list may be:

- Consumers
- Civic associations, churches and non-profits
- Federal, regional, and local governments
- Related organizations
- Related industries
- Media



# Importance of a Communications Plan

## #3: Survey the Target Audience

Listen to the target audience to determine their needs. Also find out the demographics and characteristics of the audience to help determine where and how to engage them. This can be done by:

- Surveying consumers and industry professionals;
- Hosting focus groups; and
- Collecting demographics such as gender, age, location.



# Importance of a Communications Plan

## #4: Create Objectives

Define the overall communications objectives and the strategies to help achieve the desired results

- Promote a positive public image in the media;
- Participate in a certain number of outreach events;
- Increase awareness and visibility of the organization;
- Develop more community partnerships;
- Increase public participation in certain programs; and
- Build a relationship with media, consumers, and other audiences.



# Importance of a Communications Plan

## #5: Implement Strategies

Strategies are the tools that will be used to accomplish the goals and objectives of the organization. The PSC's Consumer Outreach Program encompasses several strategies we use to meet our goal of educating consumers and informing the public.

We have three areas:

**"People Serving the Community"**

**"People Selecting and Choosing"**

**"People Saving and Conserving"**



# Importance of a Communications Plan

## #5: Develop Metrics

It is important to develop metrics in order to determine the effectiveness of your communications plan. The goal is to see a change in behavior. The following are sample metrics:

- Awareness: No. of articles; No. of positive, neutral or negative articles; No. of accurate articles
- Website Metrics: No. of new visits vs. No. of return visits (Google Analytics)
- Television Metrics: No. of viewers vs. No. of people visited website
- Social Media Metrics: No. of “likes” or “follows” vs. No. of branded tweets or No. of post views/ feedback (Topsy, Facebook Insights)



# Importance of a Communications Plan

## Resources

- HubSpot
- Public Relations Society of America (PRSA)
- LinkedIn
- PR Blogs
  - Chris Brogan, Brian Solis
  - ComPREhension
  - Online Marketing Blog
- Talking to other colleagues





The Public Service Commission is an independent agency established by Congress in 1913 to regulate electric, natural gas, and local telephone companies in the District of Columbia.

# 2011-2013 Communications Plan



The purpose of the 2011-2013 Communications Plan of the Public Service Commission (PSC) is to outline the goals, strategies, and initiatives the PSC will undertake to educate District electric, natural gas, and local telecommunications customers and inform the public about the role of the PSC, broader customer choices, and energy efficiency measures to keep their bills affordable. The communications plan also will focus on defining messages, proactive outreach to the general public and media, developing partnerships and encouraging shared responsibilities among stakeholders to achieve our PSC goals. The communications plan is being implemented through its education campaign, **The EducateDC Consumer**.



## Goals of Communications Plan:

The Goals of the **The EducateDC Consumer** education campaign are to:

1. Increase the visibility and public awareness of the PSC, the role it plays in serving the District, and the services offered to the community;
2. Educate the public about electric reliability;
3. Educate the public about implementation of advanced metering infrastructure (AMI) through Pepco's deployment of smart meters, an implementation of a new communications system;
4. Educate utility customers so they can make informed decisions in evaluating and selecting their electric, natural gas, and local telecommunications providers and services;
5. Market the PSC through expanded outreach efforts and the media;
6. Provide communications and media support; and
7. Build community partnerships.





### **Primary Target Audiences in the District:**

- Residential and business consumers of electricity, natural gas, and local telecommunications services
- Seniors citizens
- Low-Income households
- Latino & Chinese communities
- Deaf & Hard of Hearing community

### **Secondary Target Audiences in the District:**

- D.C. Council constituent services offices
- Churches
- Civic Associations and Advisory Neighborhood Commissions (ANCs)
- D.C. Government social services agencies- e.g., Office on Aging, Department of Human Services, etc.
- Social service organizations– e.g., Emmaus, So Others Might Eat (S.O.M.E.)
- Print and broadcast media

### **Keys Messages:**

#### **Key Messages**

**Theme Message: The PSC's top priorities are safe, reliable and quality utility services for District utility customers.** The key message must focus on consumer awareness, what we are currently doing, and how it is helping them now (results/ outcomes).

#### **Target Audience: All residential and business consumers**

- Having services you can count on is our top priority.
- Our top priority is YOU!
- We are always working for you. Here's how...

#### **Target Audience: D.C. Council constituent services offices, churches, civic associations, and Advisory Neighborhood Commissions (ANCs)**

- The PSC provides valuable programs and information to meet local needs.
- We all have a part to play to improve service delivery. Here's what you can do:
  - \*Get involved...attend PSC hearings, testify at PSC hearings
  - \*Share your thoughts and experiences...tell the PSC what's going on
  - \*Form partnerships...invite the PSC to speak at your meeting
  - \*Spread the message...let others know how the PSC can help

### Talking Points

1. **PSC's Role:** The PSC regulates electric, natural gas, and local telephone companies in the District of Columbia by setting rates, establishing quality of service standards and monitoring compliance, conducting investigations, and enforcing the PSC's rules and procedures.
2. **Service Reliability:** One of the top priorities of the PSC is ensuring that Pepco maintains reliability of its distribution system at a reasonable cost to ratepayers. The PSC has tasked a Working Group comprised of representatives from Pepco, PSC, and the Office of People's Counsel (OPC) to determine if the Electricity Quality of Service Standards (EQSS) should be amended to include additional or revised reliability benchmarks. EQSS, first adopted by the PSC in 2007, imposes reliability and reporting requirements on Pepco. EQSS establishes the legal baseline for Pepco's performance and provides the necessary information to the PSC to identify areas where service quality and reliability need to be improved. The Productivity Working Group will submit report by May 1, 2011. Meanwhile, the PSC is examining reliability issues several proceedings.
2. **Smart Meters:** The PSC has authorized Pepco to install new smart meters for all residential and business customers in the District. Pepco's full deployment of 280,000 smart meters began on October 4, 2010 and will continue through the end of December 2011. The PSC also has established an Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) Task Force. The AMI Task Force is responsible for educating consumers about the implementation of AMI and smart meters in the District of Columbia. The AMI Task Force is comprised of the PSC, the Office of the People's Counsel (OPC), the District Department of the Environment (DDOE), Pepco, Politics and Prose's Climate Action Committee and AARP.
4. **Renewable Energy:** The Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard ("RPS") Act, enacted by the D.C. Council, established a minimum percentage of District electricity providers' supply that must be derived from renewable energy sources. Electricity suppliers can meet the RPS requirements either by acquiring Renewable Energy Credits (RECs) or by submitting an alternative compliance payment.
5. **Net Energy Metering :** The PSC is responsible for Net Energy Metering ("NEM") applies to customers who have their own qualifying generation such as a solar generator that produces electricity for part of their own use.
6. **Utility Rates:** The PSC restructured electric rates on consumers' bills into three categories: distribution, generation, and transmission. Since Pepco is a monopoly electric distribution company, the PSC sets Pepco's distribution rates through rate cases, while consumers can choose their generational and transmission supplier whose prices are market-based. Natural gas rates on consumers' bills have been restructured into two categories: distribution and the commodity gas that flows through Washington Gas's pipes and mains. Since Washington Gas is a monopoly natural gas distribution company, the PSC sets Washington Gas's distribution rates through rate cases, while consumers can choose their commodity gas supplier whose prices are market-based. The PSC sets Verizon's basic rates through price cap plans, while competitors' prices are market-based. The PSC strongly encourages consumers to implement energy efficiency measures to make their energy bills affordable and to preserve the environment.
7. **Undergrounding:** The PSC directed Pepco to conduct an undergrounding feasibility and cost study in 2006. Pepco's study indicated that it would cost approximately \$4 billion to underground all of its overhead lines in the District. The Commission subsequently engaged its own engineering consultant to conduct an independent feasibility study. In September of 2010, Shaw Consultants Intl. released





their study which reviewed 16 reports from eight states, and four main issues were addressed: estimating the cost of undergrounding, identifying the benefits of and drawbacks of undergrounding; assessing reliability implications; and identifying potential sources of funding. Shaw calculated that the total estimated costs of undergrounding all existing overhead assets to be \$5.8 billion. The Shaw study concludes that undergrounding will reduce the frequency of outages. However, the study also shows that the duration of outages will increase because of the longer length of time it will take to detect problems when they occur underground. While short term reliability issues will be fixed, over time the reliability of the system will decrease because underground cables have a shorter life span than overhead lines. The greatest benefit comes from undergrounding primary lines rather than secondary lines. The Shaw study highlights any significant improvement in the performance of the District feeders will depend on making improvements in the overhead primary distribution system.

8. **Consumer Services:** The Office of Consumer Services assists consumers through the following services and programs: mediation of utility and payphone complaints and oppositions; responding to citizen inquiries, and conducting outreach to educate consumers and inform the public about the PSC and its formal case proceedings, low-income electric, natural gas, and telecommunications discount programs, utility budget payment plans, helping consumers make informed choices of their electric, natural gas, and local telephone providers and services.

#### **Primary Communication Vehicles and Actions**

The following are the primary communications vehicles and actions:

1. Publications: Review and update existing PSC publications
2. Website: Continue web updates to promote transparency, easy navigation and accessibility to information
3. Outreach: Continue to provide presentations and disseminate information to the community
4. Meetings with partners and stakeholders groups: Set-up meetings with D.C. Council constituent services offices, and
5. All other communications vehicles will be utilized as necessary: news releases, facts sheets, brochures and annual reports.

#### **Goals, Strategies and Initiatives of the Communication Plan**

*The following goals, strategies and initiatives will fall under “People Serving the Community”.*

**Goal 1: Increase the visibility and public awareness of the Commission, the role it plays in serving the District, and the services offered to the community by expanding target audiences and developing new information materials for the website and distribution through the media and community meetings**

**Strategy 1a: Re-design and create brochures, fact sheets, newsletters, press releases, and the annual report that are attractive and easy to understand for the average consumer:** The Commission is responsible for regulating utility services which covers a broad spectrum of issues such as statutory mandates, hearings, utility rates, and daily operations. Therefore, it becomes important to translate these technical issues into information that the average consumer can easily understand. Consumers should deem the Commission’s brochures to provide valuable information and to not be disposable. The materials must also be aesthetically appealing to consumers.



**Initiatives:**

1. Revise the refereed meter test brochure
2. Create new brochures on Complaint Process, Natural Gas Pipeline Safety Program and the One Call Grant
3. Update existing brochures on utility discount programs, “Be Smart, Heat Smart” and “Understanding Your Utility Bills”
4. Produce a PSC video to educate the public about the role of PSC and how we serve the community
5. Re-Order PSC bags and magnets (English and Spanish)

**Strategy 1b: Update the website:** The website is the central point of access for all filings, notices, hearings, meetings, publications, studies, etc. The website should allow all consumers to easily navigate and find information on the website.

**Initiatives:**

1. Create a mailing list where the public can sign up for email notifications about hearings, press releases, community outreaches, and incidents such as power failures and outages in different parts of the District.
2. Create twitter account to provide notifications of hearings and outreaches, and to distribute press releases and news relevant to the PSC
3. Add captions to all PSC video for our deaf and hard of hearing consumers

**Strategy 1c: Broaden span of Outreach Program by targeting new audiences:** To increase the public’s awareness of the PSC and our services, OCS will distribute PSC brochures to agencies and organizations that serve a high volume of District residents on a daily basis, specifically individuals within our primary target audience. These agencies and organizations are considered community resource centers which will assist the PSC with the dissemination of our information. Also, brochures will continue to be available for download from our website. The PSC will continue its community outreach efforts to primary target audiences as well as expanding and cultivating new audiences and venues.

**Initiatives:**

1. Develop and implement a PSC Speakers Bureau to increase visibility and accessibility to District ratepayers
2. Create an outreach guide for employees who volunteer at outreach events
3. Continue to distribute “Weekly Outreach Schedule” to employees to inform and recruit volunteers and post to PSC website to inform public
4. Conduct consumer focus groups to determine the concerns of District ratepayers and the most effective strategies to educate them



5. Partner with Hamilton Relay to track their outreach and participation in the CapTel initiative. It will also broaden our outreach to the hard of hearing community.
6. Partner with NationsLine to track their outreach and increase participation in Economy II (Lifeline) program.
7. Partner with the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC) to support the “Anybody Can Serve Campaign: National Day of Utility Service”

*The following goals, strategies and initiatives will fall under “People Selecting and Choosing”.*

## **Goal 2: Educate utility customers about their ability to choose a utility service provider**

**Strategy 2a: Increase visibility of customer choice to District consumers:** Many District ratepayers are unaware of their ability to choose a utility provider. Through the “The Choice Is Your” booklet, ratepayers can make informed decisions in their evaluation and selection of electric, natural gas, and local telecommunications providers and services.

### **Initiatives:**

1. Procure promotional items such as pens, stickers or buttons to make ratepayers aware of customer choice
2. Update “The Choice is Yours” booklet and procure printing of the booklet

*The following goals, strategies and initiatives will fall under “People Saving & Conserving”.*

## **Goal 3: Educate the public about energy efficiency**

**Strategy 3a: Promote the Utility Discount Programs and Heat Smart to encourage energy efficiency to District residents:** The PSC will continue to promote energy efficiency to ratepayers know how to make their energy bills affordable and to preserve the environment.

### **Initiatives:**

1. Procure promotional items such as stickers or buttons to promote energy efficiency
2. Update utility discount program flyer and the “Be Smart, Heat Smart” booklet and procure professional printing of the booklet

**Strategy 3b: Promote Net Energy Metering (NEM) to District residents:** The Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard (“RPS”) Act, enacted by D.C. Council, established a minimum percentage of District electricity providers’ supply that must be derived from renewable energy sources. NEM will assist the PSC in meeting the RPS requirements.





**Initiatives:**

1. Create a fact sheet informing consumers about NEM
2. Create a fact sheet answering questions about generating energy, earning Renewable Energy Credits and how residential and commercial customer-owned generators can become certified as a renewable energy generation facility

**Goal 4: Educate the public about the implementation of Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) and Smart Meters**

**Strategy 4a: Educate the public about AMI and smart meters through outreach and informational materials:** The PSC has established an AMI Task Force to educate consumers about the implementation of AMI and smart meters in the District. This coordinated effort will ensure factually correct information is being distributed to the public and consumers understand the process.

**Initiatives:**

1. In conjunction with the AMI Task Force, the PSC will arrange AMI forums to present Power Point presentations at four events organized by OPC and Pepco
2. Create a brochure to inform District consumers about smart meters and meter exchange
3. Create a fact sheet to provide information about the smart grid and the implementation of AMI and smart meters

**Special Projects**

- **Develop a plan for the Public Service Commission centennial (2013)**

The DC Public Service Commission was established by Congress in 1913. The centennial will include a historical overview of the Commission and a celebration of the Commission's accomplishments.



The following is an overview of the PSC marketing materials and their category.

# EducateDC Consumers

## People Serving the Community

PSC Brochure

Refereed Meter Test Brochure

Pay Telephone Brochure

“Understanding Residential Bills & Choices” Presentation

Utility Discount Programs Flyer

Rates & Charges of Verizon, Washington Gas & Pepco Flyer

*Pipeline Safety Program & Once Call Brochures*

*Complaint Process Brochure*

Annual Report

*Undergrounding Fact Sheet*

Press Releases

Fact Sheets

*PSC Video*

*PSC Speakers Bureau*

*Community Outreach/ PSC Speakers Bureau Guide*

*Twitter Account*

*Focus Groups*

Anybody Can Serve

Promotional Items: Bags & Magnets

Authorized Payment Locations Flyer

## Promoting Selection & Choice

Consumer Choice Brochures

*Promotional Items*

Rate Comparison Fact Sheet

“Understanding Residential Bills & Choices” Presentation

## People Saving & Conserving

Be Smart, Heat Smart

*Smart Grid / AMI Fact Sheet*

*Smart Meter Installation Brochure*

*NEM Fact Sheets*

The **CHOICE** is Yours!



*Items in italics are new initiatives.*



# Consumer Outreach Program

**Information Outreaches** provide basic information to consumers about the PSC. It is an introduction of who we are, what we do, and our consumer services. Information Outreaches are conducted at civic association meetings, church meetings, community fairs, etc. This is the most common and most important type of outreach because it establishes our brand within the community.

- **Speaker's Bureau:** OCS and staff members speak at community events.
- **Community Meetings:** OCS staff members provide an overview of the PSC and how we serve consumers. Staff will also address questions and provide an update on any issues before the PSC.
- **Information Booths:** Staff members attend community fairs and events to distribute information and promotional items as well as answer questions.



# Consumer Outreach Program

**Specific Topic Outreaches** offer more-detailed information regarding a specific issue or concern. This type of outreach is scheduled when an event occurs that impacts a large group of people such as a power outage or rate increase.

- **Community Hearings in Formal Cases:** Residents and businesses have an opportunity to provide their thoughts and concerns about a formal case. Hearings are held in different wards of the city.
- **Public Interest Hearings:** Legislative-style hearings where the Commissioners questions attorneys representing the parties in a proceeding.



# Consumer Outreach Program

## Specific Topic Outreaches (cont'd)

- **Formal Evidentiary Hearings:** Usually a formal rate case hearing. It is a fact finding proceeding in which the parties' attorneys cross-examine witnesses on pre-filed testimony. The Commissioners may also ask questions of the witnesses.
- **Open Meeting (Sunshine Hearings):** This type of hearing is held by the PSC after a rate case or major proceeding to announce the Commission's decision.





# Consumer Outreach Program

**Stakeholder Outreaches** allows government officials, community/non-profit leaders, consumers and other industry professionals to collaborate and provide recommendations to the Commission for improvements or support for various initiatives.

- **Working Groups:** There are several working groups that monitor issues and recommend changes in various utility programs such as Utility Discount Program Working Group, Telecommunications Relay Service Working Group, Advanced Meter Infrastructure Working Group, and several others.
- **Non-profit & Community Partnership:** OCS has built strong relationships with churches, civic associations, and other groups to assist with educating and informing the public.





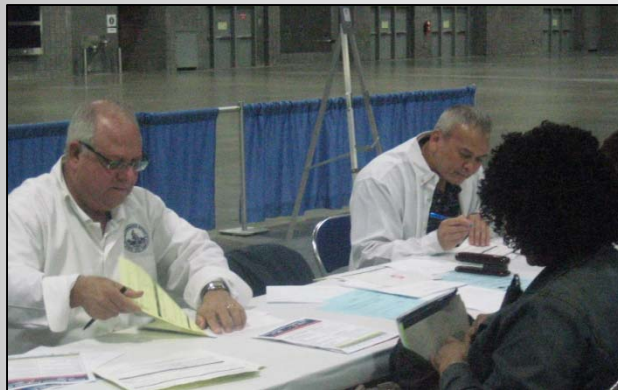
# Consumer Outreach Program

**Events** are used to promote and publicize initiatives.

- Joint Utility Discount Day (JUDD)
- 30-60-90 Day Challenge
- Anybody Can Serve, Let's Conserve
- Call 811 Before You Dig



# Joint Utility Discount Day



# 30-60-90 Day Challenge





# 811 Call Before You Dig

THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
VINCENT C. GRAY, MAYOR

## Proclamation



### SAFE DIGGING MONTH

APRIL 2012



WHEREAS, the National Association of Pipeline Safety Representatives (NASPR) has declared the month of April - National Safe Digging Month; and

WHEREAS, each year, the District of Columbia's natural gas pipelines, electric power lines and underground facilities are unintentionally damaged due to those who fail to call the nationwide 811 to help locate and mark buried infrastructure prior to excavating or digging; and

WHEREAS, the nationwide 811 number provides those who intend to dig or excavate, convenient and easy access to the District One Call Center to request locating and marking underground infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, in an effort to raise awareness about prevention of damage to buried infrastructure, the Public Service Commission of the District of Columbia has resources available and promotes calling 811 prior to digging:

NOW THEREFORE, I, THE MAYOR OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, do hereby proclaim April 2012, as "SAFE DIGGING MONTH" in Washington, D.C. and call upon all the residents of this great city to recognize the on-going efforts to make excavating and digging safer in our city.

*Vincent C. Gray*



# Consumer Outreach Program

## Communications Tools

- Brochures and Facts Sheets
- Annual Report
- Presentations
- Promotional Items
- Website
- Social Media
- Video



# PSC Website

**The website is an essential communications tool for the D.C. PSC.**

**Major sections of the website are:**

- E-Docket
- Customer Choice
- Understanding Your Utility Bills, Choices and Rights
- Current PSC News/ Hot Topics
  - Quality of Service Standards
  - Electric Reliability & Undergrounding Overhead Lines
  - Reliability of local telecommunications infrastructure
  - Replacement of Vintage Natural Gas Pipes







# Media Relations

**Media Relations** deals with informing the public through the media. The main aspect of media relations is: knowing what is news worthy about what you're doing; and building and leveraging relationships with the media.

## Tools

- Media List
- Press Releases
- Advertisements
- Letters to the Editors and Opinion Pieces
- Television and Radio Interviews
- Media Monitoring

## Events

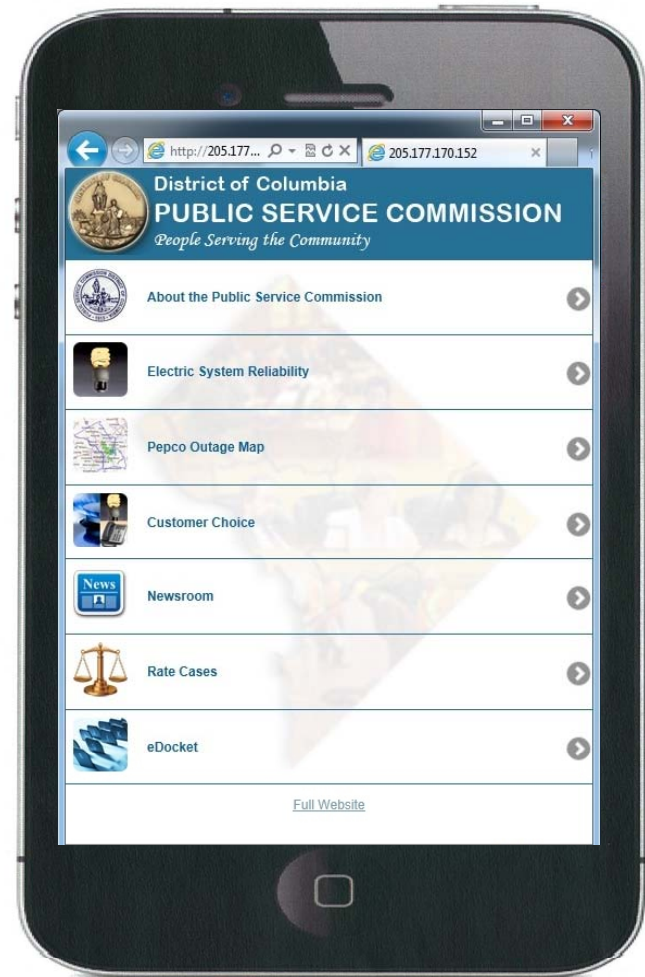
- Media Roundtable



# PSC Mobile App

## PSC Mobile App or “PSC on the Go”

- Allows the public to easily access the website
- Accessible to anyone who has access to the Internet through their smart phone



# Open Government & Transparency

The PSC is committed to ensuring that the public is informed and able to participate in proceedings. We ensure this through:

- **Open Meetings:** Each month an open meeting is held to inform the public of formal cases, orders and other issues needing Commission approval. The date and time of the meeting is posted on the website as well as the agenda, 48 hours before a meeting.
- **Live and On-Demand Media Streaming:** On the website, hearings are streamed live and recorded for on-demand viewing.



**Any Questions?**  
**Thank you.**

