



State Level Advocacy: Interaction with PUCs and Beyond



Olivia Wein

NEUAC

Ft. Lauderdale, Florida

June 26, 2017

Why engage in state utility commission proceedings?

- The well-being of low-income households can be profoundly affected by state utility commission decisions.
- “If you aren’t at the table, you are on the menu.”
- Other interests may say they are acting in the interest of low-income consumers.

Examples of State Utility Commission Proceeding Opportunities

- Low-Income Ratepayer Programs
 - Creation
 - Design
 - Implementation
- Examples of Types of Programs
 - Percentage of Income Payment Plans (PIPPs)
 - Arrearage Management Programs (AMPs)
 - Energy Efficiency Programs

Examples of Traditional Low-Income Utility Consumer Protections

- Deposit requirements and establishment of service rules
- Affordable, reasonable payment plans
- Serious illness disconnection protection rules
- Seasonal/extreme weather disconnection protections
- Protections re natural gas and electric marketers
- Prepaid service proposals
- Energy efficiency financing proposals

Examples of Rate Design Issues/Opportunities

- Low-income discounts
- Fixed charges
- Inclining/declining block rates
- Allocation of cost for ratepayer-funded programs

Other reasons to consider engaging in utility commission proceedings

- Providing the low-income household POV in commission proceedings increases awareness of the parties and increases the opportunity that your POV will be sought out ahead of time before a proposal is final.
- Consider initiating Commission action if there is a problem that needs urgent attention.

Ok, that sounds good. What is involved?

Different levels of engagement

- Intervene as a party
- Work with a coalition
- Track issues as an interested party
- Provide feedback as a member of the public

Different Types of Proceedings

- Adjudicatory
- Rulemaking
- Generic
- Informal

Homework

- Check out the Commission website (Commissioners, hot topics, open proceedings, schedule)
- Talk to folks in your network to see if any of them practice in front of the Commission
- Familiarize yourself with the rules of practice and procedure
- Check out a proceeding if you have time (check to see if the proceeding are streamed)
- If you can work in a coalition, are there members of the coalition that have expertise in front of the Commission?

Some Factors to Weigh in Deciding to Engage at the Commission

- What is the effect of this proceeding on low-income households?
- What is the likelihood of success?
- Resource questions (staff time/funding/attorney needed?/experts?)
- Opportunity to share the load by working in a coalition?

**Thank you for your interest in participating in
utility commission proceedings.**

Olivia Wein
Staff Attorney
National Consumer Law Center
owein@nclc.org
202-452-6252, x 103



Since 1969, the nonprofit **National Consumer Law Center® (NCLC®)** has worked for consumer justice and economic security for low-income and other disadvantaged people, including older adults, in the U.S. through its expertise in policy analysis and advocacy, publications, litigation, expert witness services, and training. **www.nclc.org**