

**BEFORE THE  
HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE**

**Representative Dwight Evans, Chairman**

**Opening Remarks of  
SONNY POPOWSKY  
CONSUMER ADVOCATE**

**Regarding**

**FISCAL YEAR 2008-09 BUDGET  
OFFICE OF CONSUMER ADVOCATE**

**Harrisburg, Pennsylvania  
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**Office of Consumer Advocate  
555 Walnut Street  
Forum Place, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Harrisburg, PA 17101-1923  
717-783-5048 Office  
717-783-7152 Fax  
Email: [spopowsky@paoca.org](mailto:spopowsky@paoca.org)  
97847.doc**

**CHAIRMAN EVANS, CHAIRMAN CIVERA, AND MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE  
APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE**

My name is Sonny Popowsky. I have served as the Consumer Advocate of Pennsylvania since 1990, and I have worked at the Office of Consumer Advocate since 1979. Thank you for this opportunity to discuss the Office of Consumer Advocate's proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2008-09.

The OCA's budget request for Fiscal Year 2008-09 is \$5,205,000. This represents an increase of \$136,000, or approximately 2.7%, above OCA's Fiscal Year 2007-08 final budget authorization of \$5,069,000. Our proposed budget contains an \$88,000 decrease in personnel costs by reducing our existing complement of 37 persons to 35 persons and a \$224,000 increase in other general operating costs, consisting of contracts for expert witnesses and other operational costs over OCA's 2007-2008 budget.

It is important to recognize that the OCA budget is *not* derived from the General Fund, but is paid through a separate assessment on the companies that fall within the jurisdiction of the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission. By law, the OCA budget may not exceed five one hundredths of one percent (0.05%) of the prior calendar year's total intrastate gross revenues of the companies subject to the jurisdiction of the PUC. According to the PUC estimate of 2007 utility revenues, the OCA's proposed budget represents less than one-half of its budget "cap" under that formula.

As we have set forth in the Budget Hearing materials that were submitted to Chairman Evans on February 15, 2008, the OCA provides vigorous professional representation for Pennsylvania utility consumers before both state and federal regulatory agencies and courts. The OCA participates before the PUC in all major utility rate and

service cases, merger cases, and many other proceedings that have a significant impact on consumers. OCA also participates in matters before the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and the Federal Communications Commission that have a substantial impact on Pennsylvania consumers. The OCA also participates actively on policy-making committees of non-government organizations such as the PJM Regional Transmission Organization, whose decisions have a critical impact on electric service in Pennsylvania. Through our toll-free call center, our Website, and our other consumer outreach activities, the OCA also seeks to ensure that consumers are protected and informed about changes in their utility service that can be either beneficial or harmful.

As the OCA continues its service to Pennsylvania utility consumers, we are proud of our accomplishments and look forward to meeting the continuing challenges on behalf of Pennsylvania's utility consumers. The OCA believes that it has served Pennsylvania utility consumers well both with respect to its traditional regulatory responsibilities, as well as in its role in assisting consumers to obtain the benefits and avoid the pitfalls of changing utility service markets. The OCA recognizes the importance of its role in advocating for the interests of Pennsylvania consumers and keeping consumers informed with respect to their utility services.

The OCA acknowledges and is grateful for the support that this Committee has provided over the years in considering the OCA's annual budget requests. Through our Legislative Budget Request for Fiscal Year 2008-09, the OCA asks the members of the General Assembly to permit the OCA to receive the budgetary resources needed to continue our service to Pennsylvania utility consumers.