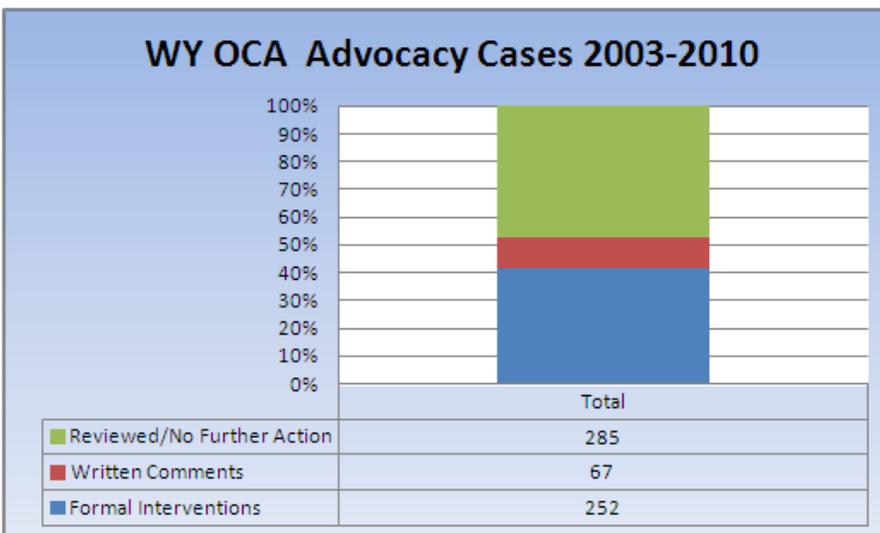


WYOMING OFFICE OF CONSUMER ADVOCATE

FACT SHEET JUNE 2012

What is the Wyoming Office of Consumer Advocate (OCA)? Pursuant to W.S. 37-2-401, the OCA is charged with representing “the interests of Wyoming citizens and all classes of utility customers in matters involving public utilities” and to ensure, “the provision of safe, efficient, and reliable utility services at just and reasonable prices.”

Wyoming’s OCA is part of the majority of state consumer advocate offices (34 out of the 44 offices) that has the authority to represent all utility consumers in the state. A minority (10 offices) are limited to representing residential, agricultural, and small business interests. It has been the OCA’s role to coordinate with interested parties and balance the interests of the different types and sizes of customers.

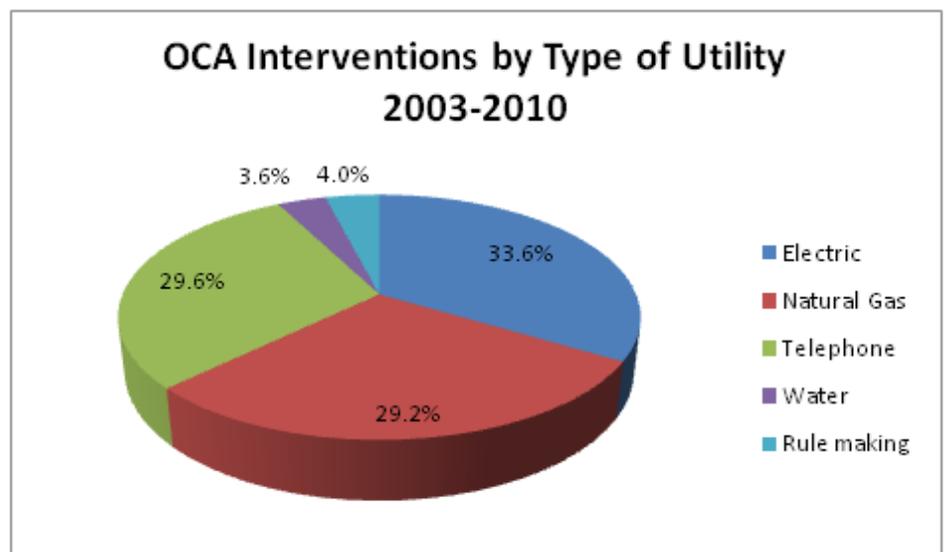


How does the OCA fulfill its challenging statutory mandate?

The OCA conducts thorough and highly complex analyses of the finances, plant assets and operations of regulated utilities within the context of the current economic conditions. Their analyses enable the OCA to provide recommendations in the form of expert witness direct testimony, represent consumers in PSC hearings and engage in challenging negotiations with the utilities and other interveners on behalf of all customer classes in

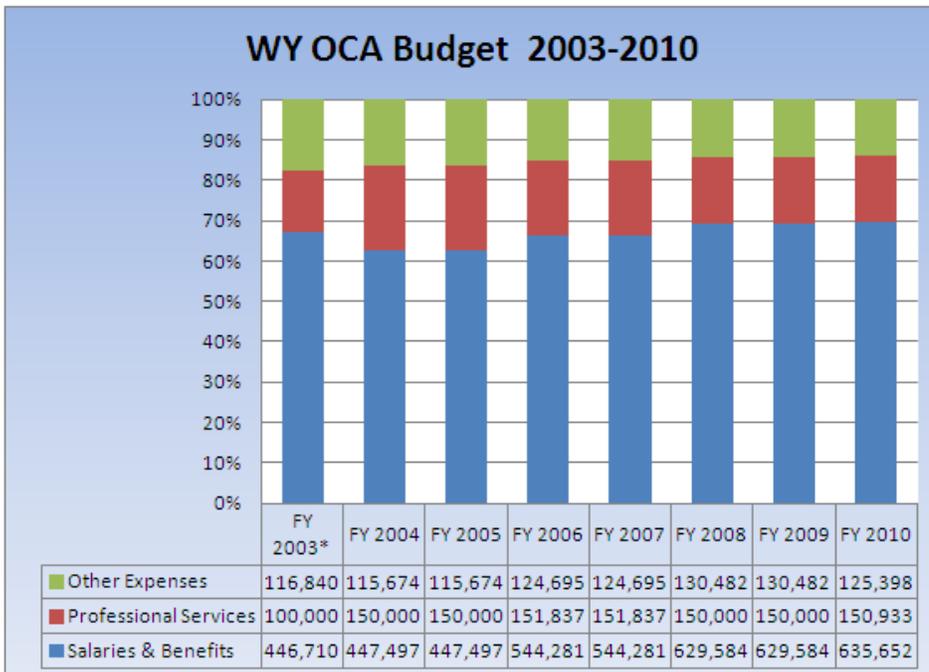
Wyoming. The OCA provides an “analysis supported voice” for all customer classes that might not otherwise be heard. Advocacy is a powerful tool to promote the public interest and reconcile the often opposing forces at play in seeking safe, efficient, and reliable utility service for Wyoming customers at just and reasonable rates.

Utility proceedings in Wyoming include Electric, Natural Gas, Pipeline Transportation, Water, and Telephone. The OCA actively reviewed 604 utility applications since its inception in 2003 through the end of 2010. The OCA intervened on behalf of all customers in 252 dockets and filed formal written comments in an additional 67 cases. The testimony the OCA filed in the dockets in which it intervened are available for public viewing on the OCA website.



In its first, and only appeal of a Commission decision, under the provisions of W.S. § 37-2-402(a)(ii), the OCA appealed the Commission's 2009 and 2010 orders which established the weighted statewide average telecommunications service rates and support benchmarks associated with the Wyoming Universal Service Fund. While the appeal cited a number of substantive issues, the primary focus related to the Commission's determination that its actions, taken pursuant to W.S. § 37-15-501, were not required to be contested case proceedings under the provisions of the Wyoming Administrative Procedures Act. The district court ruled that these are contested case proceedings and should be treated accordingly. The matter is currently before the Wyoming Supreme Court based upon the Commission's appeal of the district court ruling.

How is the OCA funded and staffed? Funding for the OCA is included in the PSC budget and collected through the uniform utility assessment. The OCA's 2010-2011 biennial budget was \$1,823,965. Of that amount, 70% is associated with salaries and benefits; 16% is designated for outside consulting services; and the remaining 14% is for Other Expenses (i.e. 6% is for office rental space and 8% is for equipment, supplies, training, and travel).



The OCA staff consists of six full time employees: the Administrator, Deputy Administrator, Senior Counsel, Counsel, Senior Analyst, and Analyst. The number of staff members has not changed since the inception of the office in 2003. All positions function as expert witnesses in regulatory proceedings, with the exception of the attorneys. The OCA's Administrator is appointed by and reports directly to the Governor.

More than half the states (26 out of 44 offices) have a separate and independent consumer advocate office. Of those, two are located within the legislative branch of state government (Florida and Montana). The other 24, though independent, are affiliated to a greater or lesser extent with the state Public Utility Commission, like Wyoming's OCA. Such relationships are usually based on physical proximity (sharing the same office building), and sometimes a sharing of clerical staff. Regardless of the administrative setting of the consumer representative's office, the general impetus for its formation has been the same—the need for advocacy on behalf of consumers in regard to utility service and rates.

How can the OCA be contacted?

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