

# THE WYOMING OFFICE OF CONSUMER ADVOCATE

## FACT SHEET

- ▶ **The Office of Consumer Advocate is not funded from the general fund.**

The funding is received through an assessment paid by the regulated public utilities in Wyoming which is passed on to customers through rates. An average residential customer pays approximately ***\$0.05 per month*** to fund the OCA.
- ▶ **The Office of Consumer Advocate conducts its work with six people and the size of the staff has not increased since the OCA's inception in 2003.**

The OCA is staffed with an Administrator, Deputy Administrator, two rate analysts and two attorneys. The Administrator and Deputy Administrator both work as full time analysts within the office in addition to conducting administrative duties. Those six people collectively have more than 100 years of experience in utility regulation and consumer advocacy.
- ▶ **The Office of Consumer Advocate DOES NOT determine the level of utility rates.**

The OCA was created to represent the interests of Wyoming citizens in matters involving public utilities (W.S. § 37-2-401) but the ultimate decisions are still made by the Public Service Commission. In making its decision, the Public Service Commission must weigh *all* of the evidence provided, not only the evidence provided by the OCA. Electric rates in Wyoming are the sixth lowest nationally.
- ▶ **The Office of Consumer Advocate has often recommended a rate increase less than that ultimately granted by the Public Service Commission.**

The OCA provides an independent, but technically expert recommendation in utility rate proceedings and other matters based on the requirements of state and federal law. The Public Service Commission frequently provides a greater increase to the utility than initially recommended by the OCA. In settlement proceedings, the OCA has often been able to negotiate a concession from the utility that the Public Service Commission would not otherwise have been able to mandate.
- ▶ **The Office of Consumer Advocate has frequently been the only party in a case other than the utility itself.**

Some large industrial customers are able and willing to represent their own interests in cases before the Public Service Commission but most residential customers are unable or unwilling to undergo the lengthy and arduous process of representing their own interests in utility proceedings. The OCA is currently the only party representing *all* customers in cases before the Public Service Commission and has often been the *only* party representing customers in formal utility proceedings.