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The Public Service Commission, established by Chapter 180, Acts of 1910, is composed of three members appointed by the Governor for six-year terms, one term expiring every two years. By Chapter 516, Acts of 1972, the Governor was authorized to appoint a substitute Commissioner who also serves for a term of six years (Code 1957, 1969 Repl. Vol., 1972 Supp., Art. 78, sec. 5A). The Governor also appoints the General Counsel for a six-year term and the People's Counsel, who serves at the pleasure of the Governor (Code 1957, 1969 Repl. Vol., Art. 78, secs. 5, 6, 12, 14). The Public Service Commission has jurisdiction over common carriers, including steam and electric railroads, sleeping car companies, bus lines, express companies, steamboat companies, power boats, ferry companies, carriers by aircraft, toll bridges, and all carriers, generally, engaged in the public transportation of passengers or freight within the State of Maryland, except those carriers of passengers which come within the jurisdiction of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Commission (Acts 1959, Ch. 613); and over all taxicabs operating in the City of Baltimore, Baltimore County, Cumberland, and Hagerstown. In addition, the Commission licenses the taxicab drivers in Baltimore City. The Commission also exercises jurisdiction over all gas, electric, telephone, telegraph, water, sewage disposal, heating and refrigerating companies operating within the State. The Commission has the power to fix both minimum and maximum rates and to suspend schedules pending the determination of the reasonableness of the proposed rates. Public utilities may not abandon or discontinue the exercise of any franchise without permission of the Commission. The Commission tests all gas and electric meters before installation; it also tests previously installed meters at the request of the consumer. It maintains a laboratory in which it makes daily tests of gas furnished in the City of Baltimore. It also makes regular and frequent tests of the gas and electricity furnished in other parts of the State. It hears matters relative to (1) rate adjustments; (2) applications to exercise franchises; (3) approval of issuance of securities; (4) promulgation of new rules and regulations; (5) quality of utility and common carrier service; and (6) railroad safety. The Commission has the authority to issue a Certificate of Convenience and Necessity in connection with an electric utility's application to construct a new generating station or transmission lines of a certain capacity (Code 1957, 1969 Repl. Vol., Art. 78, secs. 1-107).

The Commission is also authorized to make joint investigations, hold joint hearings, and issue joint or other concurrent orders in conjunction with any official board or commission of any state or the Federal government under agreements and compacts between states, under the concurrent powers of states to regulate interstate commerce as an agency of the Federal government, or otherwise (Code 1957, 1969 Repl. Vol., Art. 78, sec. 59). The Public Service Commission is also represented on joint boards created by the Interstate Commerce Commission under the Federal Motor Carriers Act to hear and pass upon applications and proceedings pertaining to interstate motor carrier operation conducted in or through not more than three states.

By Chapter 234, Acts of 1973, the General Assembly provided for a new method of financing the operations of the Public Service Commission. The filing fee of .0009 imposed on gross intrastate utility