

disposal, and steam heating companies operating within the State. It has the power to fix both minimum and maximum rates and to suspend schedules pending the determination of the reasonableness of proposed rates. Public utilities may not abandon or discontinue the exercise of any franchise without permission of the Commission.

The Commission 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. It has the authority to issue a Certificate of Public 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, Art. 78, secs. 1 through 107).

The Commission is authorized to make joint investigations, hold joint hearings, and issue joint or other concurrent orders in conjunction with any official state or federal board or commission 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, Art. 78, sec. 59). In accordance with the federal Motor Carriers Act, the Commission also is represented on joint boards created by the Interstate Commerce Commission to hear and pass upon applications and proceedings pertaining to interstate motor carrier operation conducted in or through not more than three states.

The Commission maintains a laboratory in which it makes daily tests of gas furnished in Baltimore City. It also makes regular and frequent tests of the gas and electricity furnished in other parts of the State.

In 1978, the Commission established a Consumer Assistance Section to respond to consumer complaints (Chapter 756, Acts of 1976).

The Public Service Commission is supported by an assessment on each utility and common carrier under its jurisdiction of a proportionate share of the Commission's direct and indirect expenses.

Appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate, the Commission consists of five members, one of whom is designated as chairperson. Members serve five-year terms. The General Counsel of the Commission is an attorney-at-law of the State and is appointed by and serves at the pleasure of the Commission (Code 1957, Art. 78).

## OFFICE OF THE PEOPLE'S COUNSEL

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The Office of the People's Counsel operates independently from the Public Service Commission and may participate in all proceedings before the Commission. The People's Counsel represents the interests of residential consumers of gas, electric, telephone, sewer and water services, and non-commercial users of regulated transportation industries. The People's Counsel may appear before any federal or State agency to protect the interests of residential or noncommercial users (Chapter 756, Acts of 1976). The Office of the People's Counsel may use existing staff of the Commission and also retain additional expert witnesses to testify in various proceedings before the Commission (Code 1957, Art. 78, secs. 14-15B).

## UTILITY CONSUMER ADVISORY PANEL

Appointed by President of Senate: Angela Beltram; J. C. Parker, Jr.; Walter J. Petzold; George D. Shropshire; Wardell V. Stansbury; *two vacancies*.

Appointed by Speaker of House of Delegates: Edward K. Barney; George L. Bowler; Offie Clark; William M. Kenny; Jeffrey F. Liss; Robert C. Wathan.

Ex officio: Frank O. Heintz, *Chairperson, Public Service Commission*; John M. Glynn, *People's Counsel*.

In 1978, the Utility Consumer Advisory Panel was created within the Public Service Commission (Chapter 860, Acts of 1978). The Panel advises the Public Service Commission on general goals for the development of programs, undertakes studies and issues reports, and fosters cooperation and understanding on utility matters among federal, State, and local agencies, as well as private groups and consumers. The Panel also advises the People's Counsel on general goals for the development of programs and on specific consumer objectives in order to assist the People's Counsel in formulating policy in rate cases, investigations, and other matters.

The Panel consists of thirteen public members geographically representative of the utility consuming public. Seven are appointed by the President of the Senate, and six by the Speaker of the House of Delegates. Members serve three-year