

Ohio Consumers' Counsel

Role and Overview

The [Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel](#) (OCC) intervenes in or otherwise participates in legal proceedings in both state and federal courts as well as in administrative proceedings before the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) and federal regulatory agencies on behalf of the residential utility consumers of Ohio. The agency may also conduct long-range studies concerning various topics relevant to the rates charged residential consumers and monitor utility companies compliance with legislative and regulatory standards and orders. Each year the OCC, through the Customer Response Center, provides assistance to thousands of consumers who have questions or concerns regarding their utility service. The agency also sends a biennial report to the General Assembly on the state of electric restructuring, the last being completed in December 2004.

The OCC has approximately 80 employees that consist of attorneys, economists, analysts, investigators, communication personnel, and support personnel, and has an annual budget of \$9.0 million, funded through assessments on Ohio's utility companies. The OCC participated in over 150 state proceedings and 40 federal matters during 2004. In helping to educate consumers about utility issues, the OCC maintains a Website, distributes newsletters and thousands of fact sheets, makes presentations to groups and organizations throughout Ohio, and resolves utility complaints for individual consumers.

The nine member governing board of the OCC, appointed by the Ohio Attorney General, is a bi-partisan group serving three year terms and representing three organized groups: residential consumers, family farmers, and labor. The board is responsible for hiring the Consumers' Counsel and the Deputy Consumers' Counsel to run the day-to-day operations of the agency.

Executive Priorities for the Ohio Consumers' Counsel

- Serve as the statutory advocate on behalf of Ohio's residential utility consumers.
- Participate in utility cases at the PUCO and Ohio Supreme Court.
- Represent Ohio's residential consumers in federal court and other administrative agencies like the Federal Communications Commission and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.
- Monitor utility companies compliance with rules and regulations and take legal action when necessary.
- Participate in proceedings that set policy and regulations that affect the affordability, reliability, and quality of service for residential consumers.
- Resolve complaints from residential consumers about utility services.

Summary of Budget History and Recommendations

(In thousands) BUDGET FUND GROUP	ACTUAL			ESTIMATE FY 2005	% CHANGE FY 04-05	RECOMMENDED			
	FY 2002	FY 2003	FY 2004			FY 2006	% CHANGE	FY 2007	% CHANGE
General Services Fund Group	8,015	7,382	7,026	9,278	32.0	8,595	(7.4)	8,772	2.1
TOTAL	8,015	7,382	7,026	9,278	32.0	8,595	(7.4)	8,772	2.1

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(In thousands) OBJECT OF EXPENSE	FY 2002	ACTUAL		ESTIMATE FY 2005	% CHANGE FY 04-05	RECOMMENDED			
		FY 2003	FY 2004			FY 2006	% CHANGE	FY 2007	% CHANGE
Personal Services	5,167	5,243	5,419	6,808	25.6	6,534	(4.0)	6,861	5.0
Purchased Services	505	342	319	525	64.6	585	11.4	585	.0
Maintenance	2,074	1,629	1,197	1,775	48.3	1,332	(25.0)	1,239	(6.9)
Equipment	269	163	91	169	86.6	144	(14.8)	87	(39.5)
Transfer & Other	0	5	0	0	.0	0	.0	0	.0
TOTAL	8,015	7,382	7,026	9,278	32.0	8,595	(7.4)	8,772	2.1

PROGRAM SERIES 01: Ohio Consumers' Counsel Operations

This program series maintains the general operations of the Consumers' Counsel and provides support for advocacy, representation, complaint resolution, and outreach and education activities on behalf of the residential utility consumers.

Program 01.01: Ohio Consumers' Counsel Operations

This program supports the operations of the OCC in its role as the residential utility consumer advocate representing the interests of the public through education, legal proceedings, and consumer mediation.

What the Budget Buys:

- Provides funding for the education of the public in issues concerning utilities management and telecommunications through presentations, brochures, handbooks, press releases, and other media sources;
- Allows OCC to continue to represent the interests of residential utility consumers in proceedings before state and federal regulators and in the courts;
- Supports agency initiatives that seek to provide the benefits of utility competition, emerging communications technology and energy efficiency while maintaining fair rates, service quality, and consumer protections;
- Funds the operation of a call center that provides education and assistance to thousands of consumers to address and resolve their utility questions and complaints; and
- Maintains a staff of approximately 80 employees.

FUND GROUP	FUND	ALI	ALI NAME	RECOMMENDED	
				FY 2006	FY 2007
GSF	5F5	053-601	Operating Expenses	8,594,735	8,771,940
TOTAL FOR PROGRAM				8,594,735	8,771,940

LINE ITEM SUMMARY - Consumers' Counsel

FUND	ALI	ALI TITLE	FY 2002 ACTUAL	FY 2003 ACTUAL	FY 2004 ACTUAL	FY 2005 ESTIMATE	FY 2006 RECOMMENDED	% CHANGE	FY 2007 RECOMMENDED	% CHANGE
5F5	053-601	Operating Expenses	8,015,215	7,381,914	7,025,929	9,277,519	8,594,735	(7.4)	8,771,940	2.1
TOTAL General Services Fund Group			8,015,215	7,381,914	7,025,929	9,277,519	8,594,735	(7.4)	8,771,940	2.1
TOTAL Consumers' Counsel			8,015,215	7,381,914	7,025,929	9,277,519	8,594,735	(7.4)	8,771,940	2.1