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PRESS RELEASE

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OPC PROPOSES SWEEPING AMENDMENTS TO UPDATE UTILITY CONSUMER BILL OF RIGHTS

Responding to fundamental changes in the utility regulatory arena, People's Counsel Elizabeth A. Noël proposed sweeping changes to the Utility Consumer Bill of Rights (UCBOR or Bill of Rights) the rules governing the relationship between local public utilities and their customers.

Because there have been significant changes in the utility industry, OPC undertook a comprehensive review of the original Bill of Rights, which has been in place for 25 years. OPC concluded the existing UCBOR no longer provides consumers with all the protections and safeguards its framers intended. We are calling on the Public Service Commission to close this gap by initiating a proceeding for the purpose of adopting the amendments; invite public comments; establish a working group to review and assess amendments to the UCBOR; and hold public hearings on issuing the proposed amendments to the Bill of Rights.

“Fortunately, OPC is here to sound the call for consistency in deferred payment plans and to bring an end to consumers sharing unnecessary personal information such as social security numbers. OPC is here to propose uniform standards for medical exemptions, termination of service and level payment plans that don't change with the wind,” stated People's Counsel Elizabeth A. Noël.

OPC's amendments further address critical customer issues such as rules for non-discriminatory service initiation, customer deposits, deposit refunds, unpaid balance transfers, customer of record and legal responsibility for payment, meter reading requirements, estimated billing, dispute resolution and customer payment plans.

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