

Elizabeth A. Noël, People's Counsel

PRESS RELEASE

CONTACT: PHIL HARMON • (202) 727-3071 • email: ccceo@opc-dc.gov

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OPC Seeks Investigation of Verizon for Overcharging D.C. Telephone Consumers

Today, People's Counsel Elizabeth A. Noël has filed a petition before the D.C. Public Service Commission seeking a formal investigation of Verizon's Billing System's Practices and Procedures in light of Verizon's admission in the media that over 11,000 customers in the region are the victims of company billing errors. "Clearly, the PSC must determine how many consumers are affected, how they will be notified and how quickly refunds will be made" stated People's Counsel Noël.

"At this time, what we know according to Company spokesperson Harry Mitchell is that "Some affected customers had been contacted by telephone and informed of the problem and that others will be contacted by letter," this information is barely adequate in light of the possible magnitude of the errors which we have learned may range from \$200 to several thousand dollars" said Ms. Noël. "Consumers who pay their bills through automatic bank withdrawals could be in for a very nasty surprise" said the People's Counsel.

A full investigation will enable the Commission to determine whether Verizon-Washington D.C.'s billing system's practice and procedures are reasonable and appropriate. As such it is important to develop a public record to determine the nature of the problem, how many customers are affected, what corrective measures need to be implemented, when the refunds will be made, what is being done to prevent a recurrence of this problem and what are the related system costs.

"Verizon's billing error warrants an investigation to ensure the problem has been fully identified, corrected, and most importantly, the District of Columbia consumers already affected by the error are properly credited for any improper charges. Public confidence in the utility service and billing process demands such a review" stated Ms. Noël.