



# Office of Public Utility Counsel

As requested, below is a summary of activities for the Office of Public Utility Counsel (OPUC) for 2011 through the first quarter of 2012. Also note that *OPUC's 2011 Annual Report* has a detailed account of the agency's activities in 2011. To read the report, please go to <http://www.opc.state.tx.us/Documents/AR2011.pdf>.

## Contested Cases and Projects/Rulemakings

- OPUC achieved \$367 million in customer bill savings in 2011 by participating in 43 contested cases and appeals on behalf of residential and small business customers. OPUC continues to represent consumers in 2012 in several large on-going and recently completed rate cases and other litigated proceedings, such as those involving Entergy Texas, LCRA, El Paso Electric, Southwestern Public Service Company, SWEPCO, CenterPoint, Oncor, and Lone Star Transmission.
- OPUC also participated in 30 electric and telephone projects and rulemakings in 2011, and the agency is an active participant in a number of ongoing projects and rulemakings.
  - Rulemakings related to the implementation of 2011 electric utility legislation for utility periodic rate adjustments (SB1693, PUC Project #39465) and OPUC's procedural assistance to customers in the transmission line CCN process (SB 855, PUC Project #39518) were finalized in 2011.
  - Rulemakings to implement 2011 electric utility legislation for mitigating the demand ratchet on small businesses (HB 1064, PUC Project #39829) and for implementing legislative changes to the PUC's energy efficiency rules (SB 1125, PUC Project #39674) are ongoing.
  - There are also several ongoing rulemakings related to implementing 2011 telecommunications legislation. One rulemaking amends the Commission's rules to conform them to SB 773, SB980, SB 983, HB 2295, and HB 2680 (PUC Project #39585). Others include an examination of the Small and Rural ILEC Universal Service Program and the large company fund, the Texas High Cost Universal Service Plan, pursuant to SB980, as well as the rulemaking regarding the possibility of extending Universal Service Fund assessments to VOIP providers (PUC Projects #39937, #39938, and #39717).
  - OPUC continues to collaborate with the PUC, ERCOT, Texas Reliability Entity, other state agencies, and appropriate stakeholders to examine issues related to resource adequacy, energy conservation messaging, advanced meter implementation, weather events and their impacts, and federal regulations affecting Texas utility consumers.

## Outreach & Education

- In 2011, OPUC visited 22 areas around the state to outreach to those communities on utility matters, and the agency has already had 7 outreach events in 2012, with several more scheduled throughout the rest of the year.
- In 2011, OPUC also established an ongoing military outreach program.
  - The agency conducted 9 outreach events at Fort Hood in 2011 and has completed 2 events at Fort Hood in the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2012 with additional events planned for the year.
  - OPUC created e-newsletters specific to Fort Hood and the Centex area and continues to provide these to the Financial Readiness Branch and Public Affairs Division of the installation for distribution.
  - OPUC has initiated discussions with Goodfellow Air Force Base and Dyess Air Force Base about establishing a similar partnership as the one with Fort Hood.
- OPUC continues to develop relationships and partner with a variety of organizations and stakeholders to provide outreach and education, including the Texas Silver-Haired Legislature, InterFaith community groups, the Texas Workforce Commission, the Texas Veterans Commission, and small business and trade associations.
- In 2011, OPUC addressed over 300 utility complaints and inquiries from Texans statewide, representing an increase over 2010 of more than 40%. The agency also continues to utilize social media, e-mail alerts, and newsletters for providing information to customers, and we recently launched a new Kids Corner on our webpage with basic electricity and energy efficiency information, puzzles, and safety tips geared toward school-age children (<http://www.opc.state.tx.us/kidscorner.html>).
- OPUC's Public Counsel is also a member of the National Association of State Utility Consumers' (NASUCA) Executive Committee and the New Mexico State University's Center for Public Utilities Advisory Council. In addition, OPUC partners with other national organizations such as the Electric Power Research Institute (EPRI) and the Consumer Critical Issues Forum to collaborate with industry, regulators, consumer advocates, and relevant stakeholders to evaluate and address a variety of utility and market consumer issues.