

Unprecedented Consumer, Environmental Coalition Calls on Top Energy Regulator to Create Office to Protect Consumers

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More Than 30 National, Regional and State Groups Petition FERC to Create an Office of Public Participation as Instructed By Congress

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) – A diverse coalition of consumer, environmental and low-income organizations petitioned the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) today demanding the energy regulator create a level playing field for utility ratepayers by creating and funding an Office of Public Participation as Congress directed 38 years ago.

FERC has evolved into one of the most powerful—but little understood—agencies whose decisions determine the price of electricity, natural gas and oil that consumers pay, as well as impact energy infrastructure siting. The highly technical format and incredible volume of FERC proceedings and dockets overwhelm the limited-resourced capacity of the many organizations that seek to protect consumers' pocketbooks and the public interest. As a result, important regulatory decisions often lack adequate public participation.

Congress recognized the need to give the public interest “even footing” with utilities when it directed FERC to create the office 38 years ago. But, as sometimes happens, the agency didn't follow the congressional directive. Today's petition will force FERC to address this oversight, and will begin the process of establishing a division of the commission dedicated to “coordinate assistance” to public interest organizations seeking to intervene before the commission.

“On a daily basis, decisions and motions in dozens of FERC dockets have profound impacts on energy prices, the environment and the climate,” said Tyson Slocum, director of Public Citizen's energy program. “Creating an Office of Public Participation will help ensure that the interests of average utility customers and the public at large are represented in these important proceedings.”

“The energy industry spends millions pushing its views at FERC, and metaphorically burying the agency in data, testimony and other massive filings,” said National Consumer Law Center Senior Energy Attorney Charles Harak. “It's time that the consumers' voice is also heard, just as Congress intended.”

Read the petition and view the list organizations calling for the Office of Public Participation.