

The Agency

Public Utilities Commission

Agency Operations

The Public Utilities Commission (PUC) comprises two distinct regulatory bodies: a three member Commission (Commission) and the Division of Public Utilities and Carriers (Division). The Public Utilities Commission serves as a quasi-judicial tribunal with jurisdiction, powers, and duties to implement and enforce the standards of conduct under §39-1-27.6 and to hold investigations and hearings involving the rates, tariffs, tolls, and charges, and the sufficiency and reasonableness of facilities and accommodations of railroad, ferry boats, gas, electric distribution, water, telephone, telegraph, and pipeline public utilities, the location of railroad depots and stations, and the control of grade crossings, the revocation, suspension or alteration of certificates issued pursuant to §39-19-4, appeals under §39-1-30, petitions under §39-1-31, and proceedings under §39-1-32. Through participation in the Energy Facility Siting Board, the Commission's chair also exercises jurisdiction over the siting of major energy facilities, pursuant to Chapters 42-98.

The Division, which is headed by an Administrator, who is not a Commissioner, exercises the jurisdiction, supervision, powers and duties not specifically assigned to the Commission, including the execution of all laws relating to public utilities and carriers and all regulations and orders of the Commission governing the conduct and charges of public utilities. The Division has exclusive jurisdiction over the rates, tariffs, tolls and charges, and the sufficiency, and reasonableness of facilities and accommodations of common carriers of property and passengers over the State's public roadways, pursuant to Chapters 39-12, 39-13, and 39-14. Additionally, the Division supervises and regulates Community Antenna Television Systems (CATV) in Rhode Island; certifies all public utilities; and has independent regulatory authority over the transactions between public utilities and affiliates; and all public utility equity and debt issuances.

Agency Objectives

To provide fair regulation of public utilities, CATV, common carriers, and major energy facilities; ensure just and reasonable rates; ensure sufficient utility infrastructure to promote economic development; implement legislative mandates that facilitate renewable electric generation, improve water availability, deliver rapid communications and assure that Rhode Island is on the cutting edge of reliability and environmental quality regulation, and cooperate with other states and federal government agencies to coordinate efforts to meet the above objectives.

Statutory History

The PUC and its predecessor agency, the Rhode Island Railroad Commission, have been regulating utilities in this state since 1839. The Railroad Commission was later abolished by an act of the legislature, leading to the creation of the more comprehensive Public Utility Commission in 1912. From 1981 to 1996, the duties of the Administrator of the Division and Chairperson of the Commission were combined in a single position. The Utility Restructuring Act of 1996 later divided these duties into two separate positions: Chairman of the Commission and Administrator, Division of Public Utilities and Carriers. RIGL 39-1-4 added two more commissioners effective January 1, 2004. These appointments are yet to take effect.

The Budget

Public Utilities Commission

	FY 2008 Actual	FY 2009 Actual	FY 2010 Enacted	FY 2010 Revised	FY 2011 Recommended
Expenditures By Object					
Personnel	4,801,593	5,097,697	6,472,007	6,355,708	6,729,267
Operating Supplies and Expenses	503,459	485,654	940,187	918,986	947,052
Aid To Local Units Of Government	-	-	-	-	-
Assistance, Grants and Benefits	57,478	336	337	337	337
Subtotal: Operating Expenditures	\$5,362,530	\$5,583,687	\$7,412,531	\$7,275,031	\$7,676,656
Capital Purchases and Equipment	70,754	51,915	-	47,000	50,000
Debt Service	-	-	-	-	-
Operating Transfers	-	-	-	-	-
Total Expenditures	\$5,433,284	\$5,635,602	\$7,412,531	\$7,322,031	\$7,726,656
Expenditures By Funds					
General Revenue	475,034	-	-	-	-
Federal Funds	70,662	67,758	103,600	203,864	296,330
Restricted Receipts	4,887,588	5,567,844	7,308,931	7,118,167	7,430,326
Total Expenditures	\$5,433,284	\$5,635,602	\$7,412,531	\$7,322,031	\$7,726,656
FTE Authorization	45.0	44.0	44.0	46.0	46.0
Agency Measures					
Minorities as a Percentage of the Workforce	11.1%	11.1%	11.3%	11.3%	11.3%
Females as a Percentage of the Workforce	36.5%	36.5%	39.5%	39.5%	38.6%
Persons with Disabilities as a Percentage of the Workforce	2.2%	2.2%	2.2%	2.2%	2.2%
Program Measures					
Percentage of Consumer Services Offered that Meet Completion Schedules	86.0%	84.0%	84.0%	84.0%	84.0%
Percentage of Formal Written Reports of Motor Carrier Applications Completed within 60 Business Days of Filing	80.0%	96.0%	92.0%	92.0%	92.0%
Percentage of Consumer Inquiries related to Cable Service resolved within Sixty Days	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	98.0%