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STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

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OFFICE OF CONSUMER ADVOCATE

21 S. Fruit St., Suite 18
Concord, NH 03301-2429

March 21, 2013

Retroactive

Her Excellency, Governor Margaret Wood Hassan
and the Honorable Council
State House
Concord, NH 03301

REQUESTED ACTION

The Office of Consumer Advocate requests **RETROACTIVE** authority to continue its membership and participation in the National Association of State Utility Consumer Advocates (NASUCA), Vendor # 171638, for the period of January 1, 2013 through December 31, 2013, for an amount of \$3,000.00. Funding is 100% Other Funds (Utilities Assessments).

Funding is available in account, Organizational Dues, as follows:

<u>Account</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>FY 2013</u>
Office of Consumer Advocate 02-81-81-812010-28160000-026-500251	Membership Fees	\$3,000.00

EXPLANATION

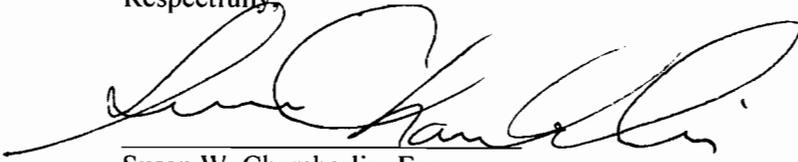
The role of state consumer advocates is to represent the interests of residential consumers of electric, natural gas, telephone and water utilities. Nationwide, state legislatures created consumer agencies after the energy crises of the 1970's. In the 1990's and into the 21st century, state advocates have been at the forefront of protecting consumers during the transition from monopolies to less regulated markets in which utilities and other firms increasingly compete with one another. Today, as the trend for competition and industry deregulation continues, state consumer advocates shift their focus to consumer protections, including service quality, reliability, and price stability. NASUCA is a national organization which brings together the expertise and experience of all the member states' consumer advocates. This request is **RETROACTIVE** because the OCA did not know that Governor & Executive Council's approval was necessary to pay the dues as they were approved in the budget process. A copy of the invoice is attached for your review. (Exhibit 1) As you can see from the invoice, the total membership dues came to \$3,145.96, however the OCA was only able to budget for \$3,000. We have spoken to NASUCA already and they have waived the difference and will accept our membership at the \$3,000.

Listed below are answers to standard questions required for Governor and Council organization dues and membership approval submissions:

1. **How long has this organization been in existence and how long has this agency been a member of this organization?** NASUCA was formed in May 1979. The OCA has been a member since at least 1996. At this time, the Business Office of the PUC has no earlier records.
2. **Is there any other organization which provides the same or similar benefits which your agency belongs to?** There is no other organization that provides the same or similar benefits to the OCA.
3. **How many other states belong to this organization and is your agency the sole New Hampshire state agency that is a member?** This is a national organization with 44 consumer advocates in 40 states and the District of Columbia. The OCA is the sole New Hampshire agency member.
4. **How is the dues structure established? (Standard fee for all states, based on population, based on other criteria, etc.)** The dues structure is based on a formula using each agency's approved or proposed budget. Please see attached formula page from NASUCA (Exhibit 1).
5. **What benefit does the state receive from participating in this membership?** NASUCA provides current information on utility regulatory topics through participation in committees, monthly teleconferences and annual meetings.
6. **Are training or educational/ research materials included in the membership? If so, is the cost included? Explain in detail.** NASUCA holds member conferences on utility regulatory concerns of special interest to consumer advocates. The 2012 NASUCA annual meeting included presentations and materials on EPA regulations, cost of reliability improvements, consumer education and outreach, coordination between natural gas and electricity markets, rate design risks for distribution system improvement and elimination of convenience fees for paying utility bills with debit and credit cards.
7. **Is the membership required to receive any federal grants or required in order to receive or participate in licensing or certification exams? Explain.** No. Membership in NASUCA is not required in order to receive federal grants or participate in licensing or certification exams.
8. **Is there any travel included with this membership fee? Explain in detail any travel to include the number of employees involved, the number of trips, destination if known and purposes of membership supported trips.** No. However, grants are sometimes available for conference/meeting participation. For example, the NH OCA participated in the NASUCA 2012 Annual Meeting through a grant at no cost to New Hampshire.
9. **Which state agency employees are directly involved with this organization? (Indicate if they are members, voting members, committee members, and/or officers of the organization?)** The Consumer Advocate, Susan Chamberlin serves on the Electric Committee, the Assistant Consumer Advocate, Rorie Hollenberg serves on the Water Committee, Finance Director Donna McFarland serves on the Tax and Accounting Committee as well as the Natural Gas Committee, Utility Analyst Stephen Eckberg serves on the Telecommunications Committee and Legal Assistant Christina Martin serves on the Consumer Protection Committee.
10. **Explain in detail any negative impact to the State if the Agency did not belong to this organization.** It is through NASUCA that the OCA keeps up to date on how the same matters are addressed in different states. The OCA learns whether a utility's position is consistent and whether other state proposals are effective. NASUCA also educates Consumer Advocates on utility filings in one state which then appear in another. The OCA's effectiveness is reduced if we cannot learn about national events.

Your consideration of our request is appreciated.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Susan W. Chamberlin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "S" and "W".

Susan W. Chamberlin, Esq.
Consumer Advocate

Attachment



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION
OF STATE UTILITY
CONSUMER ADVOCATES

NASUCA

January 11, 2013

2013 Invoice

FULL MEMBER

Bill to:

Ms. Susan Chamberlin
Office of the Consumer Advocate
21 S. Fruit Street, Suite 18
Concord NH 3301-5141

NASUCA Annual Assessment
January 1, 2013 to December 31, 2013

Projected 2013 Office Budget (Used to Compute Annual Assessment)

\$ 672,644

2013 Assessment Rate: 0.3785% (See attached explanation)

Variable Amount:

\$ 2545.96

Flat Fee: Federal Advocacy Fund

+ \$ 600.00

Total Amount Due:

\$ 3145.96

Make checks payable to: NASUCA, payable in U.S. funds only

Mail checks to:

Nicole Haslup
Deputy Director
NASUCA
8380 Colesville Road, Suite 101
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

