

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

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CONSUMER ADVOCATE
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OFFICE OF CONSUMER ADVOCATE

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

December 20, 2013

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

REQUESTED ACTION

The Office of Consumer Advocate requests 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, 2014 through December 31, 2014, 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 2014</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 public utility services. With increasing competition and industry deregulation, state consumer advocates shift their focus to consumer protections, including service quality, reliability, consumer education and price stability. NASUCA is a national organization which brings together the expertise and experience of all the member states' consumer advocates. A copy of the invoice is attached for your review. (Exhibit 1) Total membership dues came to \$3,181.63. The OCA's entire budget for such dues is \$3500 with \$3000 available for NASUCA membership. The organization agreed to waive the amount over \$3000.

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

- 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.

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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, Barbados 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 nationwide 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 2013 NASUCA annual meeting addressed cyber security, unauthorized charges on consumer phone bills, smart grid technology, energy efficiency, state legislative developments, wind power projects and telecom proposals to replace copper line services with wireless substitutes, among other items.
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 2013 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 and Gas Committee, the Utility Analyst, Stephen Eckberg serves on the Telecom Committee and the 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 utility consumer protections are implemented in different states. The OCA learns whether a utility's position is consistent and whether other state proposals are effective. The OCA's effectiveness is increased through learning best practices from other state consumer advocates.

Your consideration of our request is appreciated.

Respectfully,



Susan W. Chamberlin, Esq.
Consumer Advocate

Exhibit 1(NASUCA Invoice)

ASSESSMENT DUES FORMULA**2014 NASUCA MEMBERSHIP ASSESSMENT****Instructions:**

To the best of your ability, determine your agency's 2014 calendar year budget or appropriation for utility consumer advocacy operations. If you do not have your 2014 office budget, you may use your prior year's budget as a proxy.

Select and apply the formula for computing your 2014 membership assessment (*see below*).

Complete the enclosed invoice, listing the amount due and the budget or appropriation amount used to compute your assessment.

Send the following to Nicole Haslup, Deputy Director, at the NASUCA Office:

- 1) Completed Invoice Form
- 2) A check payable to "NASUCA"; Payable only in U.S. funds.

Questions? Call or email Michele Beck at (801) 530-6674 or mbeck@utah.gov.

**NASUCA Membership Assessment
Dues Formula**

Full Members: The Dues formula for full members will be a two-part calculation. First there is a variable dues component set at 0.3785% of your budget **with a minimum dues assessment of \$946 and a maximum of \$10,093**. The second portion is a \$600 flat fee charged to each full member office to finance NASUCA's Federal Regulatory Advocacy Fund. Example: If your budget is \$850,000, then dues are as follows:

Variable Component:	$\$850,000 \times .003785 =$	\$3,217.25
Flat fee:		<u>\$ 600.00</u>
Total Dues =		\$3,817.25

Associate Members: Dues for associate members are 0.3028% of budget (20% less than full members), with a **minimum of \$946**. Associate membership is not available to offices that qualify for full membership.

Affiliate Members: Dues for affiliate (non-voting) members are 0.265% of budget (30% less than full members), with a **minimum of \$530 per year**. Affiliate membership is not available to offices that qualify for full membership.



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION
OF STATE UTILITY
CONSUMER ADVOCATES **NASUCA**

November 25, 2013

2014 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, 2014 to December 31, 2014

Projected 2014 Office Budget (Used to Compute Annual Assessment)

\$ 682,069

2014 Assessment Rate: 0.3785% (See attached explanation)

Variable Amount:	\$ <u>2,581.63</u>
Flat Fee: Federal Advocacy Fund	+ \$ <u>600.00</u>
Total Amount Due:	\$ <u>3,181.63</u>

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

