

# Colorado PUC: An Overview

Doug Dean, Director



**COLORADO**

Department of  
Regulatory Agencies

Public Utilities Commission

# Value to the State

- PUC is 100% Cash Funded
  - Fixed utility fund
  - Relay fund
  - Telecom fund
  - Transportation fund
  - High Cost Administration fund
  - TNC fund
- PUC saves Colorado consumers over \$10.75 for every \$1.00 spent to run the agency

# History

- Railway Commission established in 1885
- Public Utilities Act passed in 1913
  - Granted authority over all utilities
  - Foundation of PUC statutes today
  - Created “Public Utilities Commission”
- PUC added to Constitution - 1954
- PUC type 1 transfer to DORA - 1969

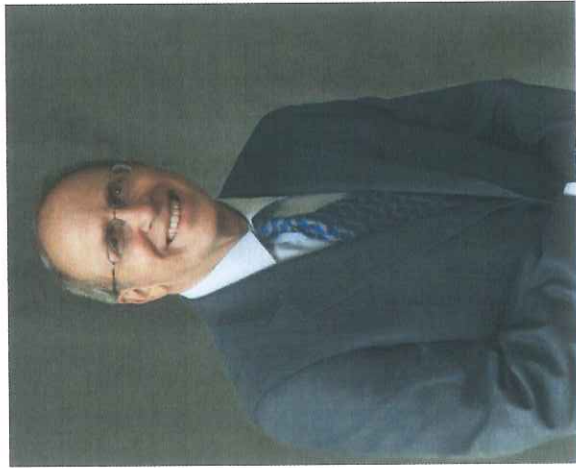
# Commissioners

- Three commissioners
- Appointed by the Governor
- Confirmed by majority vote of State Senate
- Serve four-year terms - may be reappointed
- No more than two commissioners from one political party
- One commissioner appointed Chairman

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# Commissioners

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Joshua Epel (D)  
Chairman  
2011 - 2019



Pam Patton(D)  
2012 - 2016



Glenn Vaad(R)  
2014 - 2017



# Our Mission



*The Colorado Public Utilities Commission serves the public interest by effectively regulating utilities and facilities so that the people of Colorado receive safe, reliable, and reasonably-priced services consistent with the economic, environmental and social values of our state.*

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# Director

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- Appointed by Executive Director of DORA with approval of Commissioners
- Responsibilities:
  - Manage operations of the PUC to carry out public utilities law pursuant to §40-2-103, C.R.S.
  - Implement Commission policies, procedures and decisions
  - Direct administrative functions and manage staff

# Commission Responsibilities

- Quasi-Legislative - Promulgate rules
- Quasi-Judicial - Ensures due process for all parties in adjudicatory proceedings
- In general, the PUC serves the public interest by balancing needs of consumers and utility service providers



# Five Areas of Responsibility

## - Utilities

- Operating Authority - Determine benefit to consumers in granting right to do business
- Rates - Maintain just and reasonable utility rates for consumers
- Service - Ensure consumers have reliable and responsive utility service
- Safety - Minimize dangers for consumers related to regulated utility service
- Infrastructure - Ensure a constructive regulatory environment to recover capital

# Responsibility for Non-Utility Motor Carriers

- Minimum safety standards for the benefit of providers, consumers, and the public
- Minimum insurance requirements
- Certain quality standards
- Determine rates collected by towing carriers for towing and storage of motor vehicles in absence of owner consent



# PUC Structure



The PUC is comprised of 95 FTE and is organized into 11 sections, each led by a section chief.



# External Affairs



- Respond to consumer complaints and questions
  - Secured \$1,070,953 in refunds for consumers in FYE 2015
- Media inquiries and informational materials
  - Publish Consumer FYI pamphlets to assist consumers in understanding utilities and regulation

# Policy Advisors

- Advise the Commissioners and Administrative Law Judges on energy, water, and telecommunications matters
- Within the context of case records, provide expertise in financial analysis, economics, policy, and engineering
- Organize and manage proceedings on contested matters
- Facilitate Commissioners' open decisions meetings
- Craft written decisions after Commissioners' deliberations

# Regulatory & Legal Affairs and Administrative Support

- Regulatory and Legal Affairs
  - Ensure that appropriate processes and procedures are followed by staff and Commissioners
  - Work with Attorney General's Office to ensure legal services dollars are maximized to greatest benefit of consumers
  - Oversee Commission rulemaking process

# Regulatory & Legal Affairs and Administrative Support

- Administrative Support
  - Process all filings and decisions for all regulated industries
  - Administer all Commission agendas and minutes
  - Process all transportation stamps, fingerprints, and over-the-counter permits
  - Administer the Commission's electronic filing system

# Research and Emerging Issues

- Research topics likely to impact utility regulation in the near future
- Assist the Commission to anticipate the future and adjust regulatory practices accordingly
  - Present “Commissioner Information Meetings” on a multitude of topics
- Administer special projects



# Energy

- Staff expertise in electric, natural gas, steam and water facility design, engineering, procurement, construction and operation
- Review investor-owned utility acquisitions, operations and reliability filings
- Appear as a litigant in energy cases and advise Commissioners in uncontested matters
- Limited oversight of electric cooperative RES compliance

# Economics

- Appear as litigants before the Commission, recommending just and reasonable rates, while balancing consumer rates with the financial health of the utility
- Conduct thorough audits of the natural gas, electric, steam and water investor-owned utilities
- Negotiate settlements with utilities which avoid costly litigation
- Provide expertise to other sections within the PUC performing economic analysis

# Telecommunications

- Provide expertise in financial analysis, economics, operations, planning & engineering
- Regulate telecommunications companies & 911 network providers for rates and service quality
  - Serve as advisors to Commissioners on all non-litigated matters
  - Appear as a party in most litigated cases
  - Negotiate settlements with utilities
- Administer state and federal subsidy programs for rural high cost support & low income consumers
- Serve as state telephone number administrator
- Oversee Colorado Relay Program for the deaf, deaf/blind, hard of hearing & speech impaired

# Transportation and Administration

- **Transportation**
  - Varying degrees of regulatory oversight of taxis, limos, shuttles, towing companies, household goods movers, transportation network companies and hazardous materials carriers
  - Enforce State law and Commission rules regarding market entry, service quality, and safety
  - Jurisdiction limited to intrastate carriers
- **Administration**
  - Responsible for the management of PUC operations
  - PUC liaison with Department for accounting, budgeting, human resources, and OIT issues
  - Oversees Colorado No-Call

# Administrative Hearings

- Administrative Law Judges who:
  - Conduct hearings in contested cases
  - Issue Recommended Decisions
  - Assist in rulemaking functions
- Court Reporters who:
  - Record testimony during all Commission hearings and transcribe them as needed

# Gas Pipeline Safety

- Safety jurisdiction over 57,277 miles of intrastate natural gas main, service, transmission, and gathering pipelines
- Includes 1,642,985 individual gas service lines
- Fining authority for safety violations
- Investigate pipeline incidents/releases

# Rail/Transit Safety Section

- Safety oversight of railroad and light rail crossings
- Safety oversight of rail fixed guideway systems (e.g., RTD Light Rail)
- Establish certain railroad clearance safety standards and railroad peace officer minimum standards
- Does not regulate general safety or rates of railroads
- Must find 20% match funding for FTA Grant
- No highway-rail signalization safety funding appropriations since 2003

# Recent Major Cases

- High Cost Fund Support and Additional Areas of Effective Competition
- Public Service Gas Rate Case
- Black Hills Acquisition of SourceGas
- City of Boulder Transfer of Assets from Public Service
- Atmos Gas Rate Case
- Black Hills 2016-2018 Electric DSM Plan
- Black Hills CPCN for Peak View Wind



# Recent Major Rulemakings

- Transportation Network Company Regulations - SB14-125
- Data Access and Privacy for Gas and Electric
- Basic Emergency Service, 9-1-1
- Employment Factors for Building Generation Facilities - SB13-1292
- Electric Rules Clean up and Implementation of SB15-046 and 254 and HB15-1284 and 1377
- Future 2016 - Telecommunications Regulatory Reform



# Challenges



- Budgetary challenges
  - Telecommunications Fund
  - Motor Carrier Fund
- 2015 YTD workload statistics:
  - Processed 35,761 total documents
  - Issued 1,260 decisions
  - Opened 928 dockets
  - Analyzed 275 tariff filings

# Rate Case Annual Customer Savings



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# Questions?

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[www.colorado.gov/dora/puc](http://www.colorado.gov/dora/puc)