



Contact: Caryn Benisch, 202-429-4940, carynbenisch@rational360.com

Consumers for Paper Options Applauds the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission Decision Requiring Utilities to Provide Paper Bills Free of Charge

Bi-Partisan Commission Unanimously Approves Motion; Argues Fee for Paper Bills Disproportionately Affects Low-Income & Elderly Customers

WASHINGTON, D.C. (November 2, 2015) – [Consumers for Paper Options](#) (CPO), a coalition of individuals and organizations advocating for access to paper-based services and information, today applauded the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission (PUC), which unanimously ruled that public utility companies cannot charge customers a fee to receive paper bills in the mail.

In reaching its decision, the bi-partisan commission concluded that the cost of providing customers with paper bills is included in the operating expenses of the utility, and that charging a fee for paper bills is inconsistent with commission regulations, long-standing precedent and established practices of Pennsylvania public utilities. Members of the Commission also argued that companies have a responsibility to provide bills impartially, and that paper-billing fees discriminate against low-income and elderly consumers who are more likely to request bills by mail.

“The Commission’s decision signifies a major victory for many Pennsylvanians who prefer or need to receive paper bills,” said John Runyan, executive director of CPO. “The reality is that many Americans, including the elderly, those with disabilities, and members of low-income families, simply don’t have the option to access their bills online, which is by no means a justification for a financial penalty.”

Last March, following several years of investigating telecommunications companies that were charging a fee for paper bills, the Commission concluded that charging for paper delivery was unfair and against commission regulation. The Commission’s latest rulemaking amends the March decision to include any utility company.

Runyan continued, “Given that the vast majority of Americans prefer paper-based options, it is preposterous that companies should charge an additional fee for paper bills, which have always been, and always should be, a customary service. We applaud the Commission for taking this critical step toward ensuring all Pennsylvanians have equal access to information, and urge other state public utility commissions to follow suit.”

About Consumers for Paper Options

Consumers for Paper Options brings together industry, non-profits and consumers in an effort to address the transition to Internet-only resources at the exclusion of millions of citizens. Consumers for Paper Options is united in the belief that paper-based communications are critically important for millions of Americans, especially seniors and the 25 percent of households without Internet access. While regulated entities and governments at every level need to streamline services, cut costs and improve efficiencies, the goal of Consumers for Paper Options is to preserve access in a way that neither

hinders the natural evolution of technology nor discriminates against those who may not, or cannot, use it. For more information, visit www.paperoptions.org.

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