

Elizabeth A. Noël, People's Counsel

## PRESS RELEASE

CONTACT: PHIL HARMON • (202) 727-3071 • email: [ccceo@opc-dc.gov](mailto:ccceo@opc-dc.gov)

November 12, 2004

### OPC FIGHTS TO PUT THE “B” IN WG’S BUDGET PAYMENT PLAN

Acting on tips and complaints from consumers, People’s Counsel Elizabeth A. Noël filed a petition requesting a Declaratory Ruling that WG “budget billing” means “budget” with one consistent monthly payment.

“Our Office is hearing from consumers that entering a budget billing cycle does not mean you will pay the agreed upon payment for 12 months. Consumers complain that WG changes the agreement at whim making it impossible to budget for energy payments each month. OPC wants the policy consistent with the tariff” stated People’s Counsel Noël.

OPC is calling upon the Commission to stand behind the language used in its public communications supporting the presumption that the Budget Payment Plan is:

*[enabling them [“consumers”] to pay a **fixed amount each month** by spreading costs over a 12-month period , thereby reducing gas bills during high-usage winter months. Thus, a household can pay less than the actual monthly cost during the winter months and make up the difference during the remainder of the year.]* (emphasis added)

The budget payment plan was designed in the mid-1970's to ease the high seasonal costs of energy during the winter months by spreading payments to the warmer spring and summer months when usage is generally much lower.

OPC is asking the Commission to initiate this proceeding for the purpose of declaring the proper operational application of Washington Gas’ Budget Payment Plan. The proper operational application of the Budget Payment plan limits WG to one consistent monthly payment amount for the entire Budget Payment Plan year, with no increases during the Budget Payment Plan year.