Dear Consumers,

As People’s Counsel for the District of Columbia, I lead a staff dedicated to helping District of Columbia residents get safe and reliable utility service at a price you can afford. The Office of the People’s Counsel is an independent agency of the District government that was created to advocate, educate and protect utility consumers of natural gas, electricity, local telephone service and more recently, water services. Best of all, our services are free.

We work to assist utility consumers resolve consumer complaints about billing and other issues, we provide legal representation for all ratepayers before the DC Public Service Commission when a utility company seeks to change the rates or services it offers, and we conduct consumer education and outreach to inform you of your rights as a utility ratepayer, new technology and important service issues and alerts.

This comic has been created as a fun way to include the entire family in thinking about utility service. We hope you will enjoy following along as our young heroine Anita shares what she learns about how OPC can help!

Sincerely,

Sandra Mattavous-Frye
People’s Counsel

The Office of the People’s Counsel (OPC) attends events across the District of Columbia. It’s a great way to discuss resident’s concerns, inform people about OPC’s Mission, and talk about ways that consumers can receive help.
Okay! We are a consumer advocate for important services like water, electricity, gas, and local telephone service. It is our job to represent the needs of consumers on big projects, like when a utility wants to change how they deliver services to customers and how much they are permitted to charge for it.

We can also ensure your rights are protected when there is an issue with your bill, an issue with payment, or the “quality” of your utility service, such as frequent power outages.

The Office of the People's Counsel Can:

- Advise you of your rights as a utility customer.
- Share findings, and discuss options available to you.
- Begin an investigation on your behalf with the utility company.
- If necessary, negotiate a payment arrangement or other resolution.

Hi Anita, I'm Ms. Brown and this is Mr. Ford. Thanks for stopping by the OPC booth. Do you know about the Office of People’s Counsel and how we help utility customers?

Hi Anita, I'm Ms. Jones, and yes, we're here to help you. We can also ensure your rights are protected when there is an issue with your bill, an issue with payment, or the “quality” of your utility service, such as frequent power outages.

Hi Anita, I’m Ms. Jones, and yes, we’re here to help you. Anytime you have a question or a utility problem and need help, call OPC at 202.727.3071 and speak with an OPC consumer services specialist who can investigate on your behalf and get you the help you need.

Take this brochure. Anytime you have a question or a utility problem and need help, call OPC at 202.727.3071 and speak with an OPC consumer services specialist who can investigate on your behalf and get you the help you need.

No, not really. So you are saying you can help if my bill is wrong?

If necessary, negotiate a payment arrangement or other resolution.
But you work for the government and our bill comes from a private company, how can you help with that?

That's a really good question. By law OPC was created to advocate for utility consumers. OPC also works to educate utility consumers and we are authorized to protect consumers in matters that come before the Public Service Commission, Water Authority, Federal agencies, and the Courts in matters concerning DC utility services.

When a utility wants to make a change, it is important that everyone has a voice. The Office of People's Counsel is a strong voice and we work to make sure consumers can participate and voice their concerns directly to decision-makers. It is the job of our attorneys and experts to review the utility company's plans and to make the case that what is proposed will provide good reliable service at affordable rates for every consumer. If not, OPC will suggest changes to the plans that meet the needs of everyone.
Maybe the bill is in error. At the local fair we learned about the DC Office of the People’s Counsel. They said the OPC-DC can help if you have a problem with your bill. They can investigate to see if something is wrong, they can also negotiate with the company for you to get more time to pay and keep utility service on.

Yes we should call. The OPC works for the consumer, the services they provide are free, and they can also refer us to other agencies that can provide help/assistance.

Look dear, if we call OPC they can work to stop our service from being disconnected, help us with billing disputes, work out payment arrangements, and other services.

I’m not sure it’s a good idea to call such an agency with questions about our bills.

Yes, I think we should call to see how OPC can help!

A FEW DAYS LATER...

Abuela... What’s wrong?

It’s because of the utility bills. We have been working to conserve and keep our bills low, now this! What can we do?

Look, I have a pamphlet from OPC. It shows how OPC can help with Natural gas utility, electricity, telephone, and DC Water utility services.
The lady we spoke with at the OPC told us that the issue was not our fault and that they would contact the utility on our behalf.

Anita! They are really grateful. They called the OPC, as you recommended, and they have good news! OPC is investigating their case!

Really? I’m so glad!

And also, we spoke with the people at the OPC and they are organizing a visit to the building so they can explain to our neighbors what they do and how they can help. This is important for some of the older residents on fixed incomes (like Senora Rivas) who tells me she has trouble paying utility bills too.

And when did they say they will have a solution?

Well, they are working on it, but they explained the utility agreed there would be no disconnection or late charges while the investigation is ongoing.

That’s just fair. I’m glad I brought the brochure.

You deserve a treat Anita, Thank you so much!

¡Hola Anita!

Hi, my love!

Hi, guys!

¡Hola Anita!

Awwwww!

Here you go, great job!

And also, we spoke with the people at the OPC and they are organizing a visit to the building so they can explain to our neighbors what they do and how they can help. This is important for some of the older residents on fixed incomes (like Senora Rivas) who tells me she has trouble paying utility bills too.
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