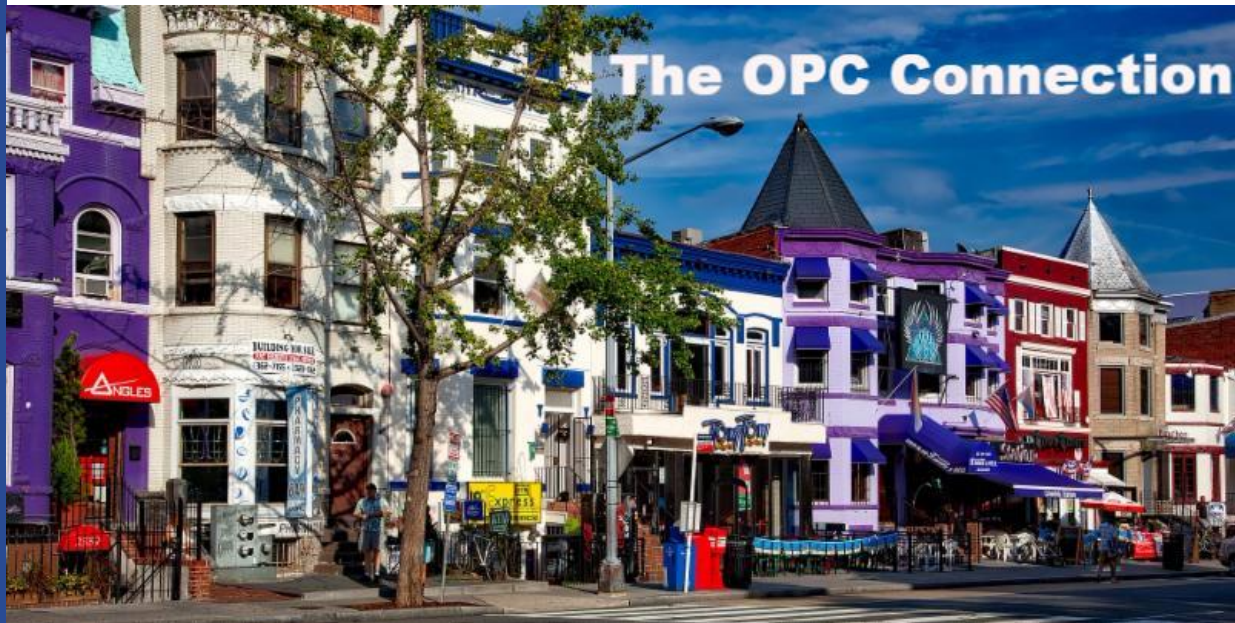




Office of the People's Counsel

ADVOCACY | EDUCATION | PROTECTION



April 2023

A Note from Your People's Counsel Sandra Mattavous-Frye

And The Beat Goes On

Depending on your generation, you might be familiar with: “[And The Beat Goes On](#),” by the Whispers, the legendary R & B group, or “[The Beat Goes On](#),” by Sonny & Cher,” the infamous pop duo. Or as many young artists have done, in sampling or covering a popular lyric, I’ll use it to describe OPC’s past and continuing “drumbeat” to serve DC utility consumers. I am pleased to share what we've drummed up in the ***OPC 2021-2022 Progress Report: “Preparing Today for a Better Energy Future.”***



In the report, we document OPC’s work in fiscal years 2021 and 2022 to ensure District consumers have access to resources and financial assistance programs to help them recover from the

lingering pandemic, have uninterrupted critical utility services, and understand the impact of climate change. Take a look at the Progress Report at opc-dc.gov or click on the cover below.

In the current fiscal year, OPC is continuing to implement and support policies and initiatives that ensure that the District meets its climate goals and consumers have equitable access to reliable and affordable utility services and clean energy technologies.

OPC's valuable service to DC residents was in the spotlight on April 5 during the agency's fiscal year 2024 budget hearing before the DC Council. Public witnesses gave personal accounts of OPC's advocacy. Fast forward to about 59:00 on this [link](#) to see their testimony. Then, go to 1:13:00 to see my testimony. Among the points I made: OPC will continue to be fiscally prudent, accountable and give consumers the most for their buck.

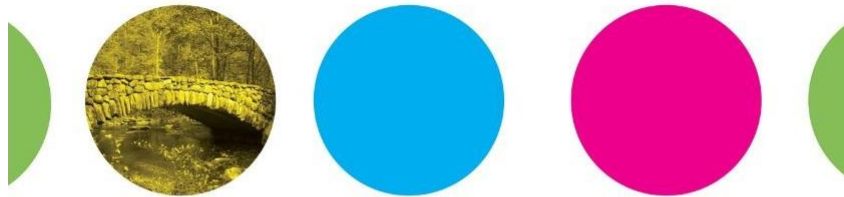
And the beat goes on!



Don't Miss an Urgent Call from Planet Earth!

There's still time to register to attend OPC's Climate Summit. Please click [here](#) or below to sign up for the free event for all ages.

FOOD, FUN, AND GIVEAWAYS



**OUR PLANET
OUR FUTURE**
OPC YOUTH CLIMATE SUMMIT



**YOU HAVE AN URGENT
CALL, IT'S FROM
PLANET EARTH.**



OPC Puts Pepco's \$190 Million Rate Increase Proposal Under the Microscope



On April 13, Pepco filed an application with the DC Public Service Commission requesting to increase rates in a multiyear rate plan that will allow the electric company to automatically increase rates

for three years in a row. Pepco wants the Commission to approve a total rate increase of \$190.7 million or \$18.40 added to the average monthly electric bill, divided over three years. It breaks down like this:

- \$116.4 million increase effective February 15, 2024
- \$36.9 million increase effective January 1, 2025
- \$37.2 million increase effective January 1, 2026

Pepco claims the funds are necessary to support and advance the District's clean energy and climate goals and create what they describe as a "Climate Ready Grid." Pepco states that it plans to make a series of investments in infrastructure and operations that will increase system readiness and benefit its customers through the energy transformation underway.

OPC is closely analyzing Pepco's proposal and asking critical questions:

- Are the rates Pepco is predicting over the three years of the multiyear plan reasonable and accurate?
- Is there evidence that the rate increase is justified and necessary to cover Pepco's construction and project costs and directly benefit DC residents?
- Would it be more appropriate for other resources to pay for some of the costs in the plan rather than ratepayers?
- Is Pepco seeking a reasonable return for its shareholders, or are their profits too high?
- Are residential customers, who are being asked to foot 43% of the rate hike, being charged unfairly compared to other customer classes such as businesses?
- Are proposed changes to bill payment assistance programs sufficient or will low- and moderate-income ratepayers suffer from a higher energy burden?

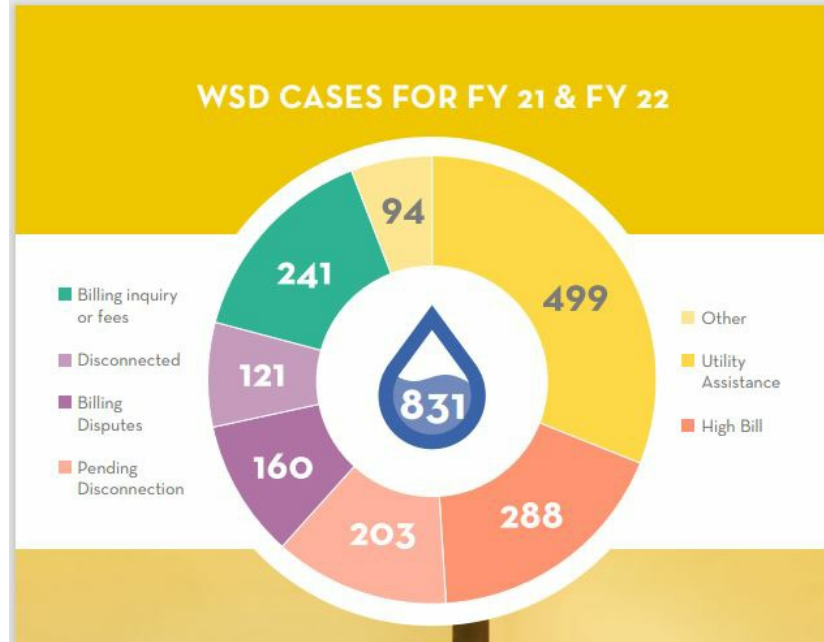
OPC will keep consumers updated on the Pepco rate hike plan. We encourage you to share any comments and concerns with the Public Service Commission at [dcpssc.org](https://www.dcpssc.org) or with OPC at (202) 727-3071 or info@opc-dc.gov.

**Happy
Birthday to
OPC's
Water**

Services Division!

Four years after the DC Council passed legislation making OPC the statutory advocate for DC Water consumers, the Water Services Division

continues its enthusiastic outreach and highly effective case management on behalf of DC residents.



Since its inception, WSD has handled more than 2,000 cases, from resolving bill payment problems and disputes to engaging consumers in all eight wards at community meetings in-person and virtually.

Prior to 2019, water customers called on OPC for help when they faced high water and sewer bills, service problems or disconnections. OPC staff could only refer them to DC Water staff. Now, OPC can independently represent water consumers.

Unlike the other utilities, DC Water is not regulated by the Public Service Commission, and water rates are not set by the PSC. This complex construct means that there are limits on OPC's role. Nonetheless, WSD has stepped up to do all it can to ensure consumers receive reliable water services at fair and reasonable rates.

Despite the challenges resulting from the COVID-19, the OPC division did not slow down its response to consumer needs or staff presence in the community.

A Ward 2 senior resident praised OPC at a recent DC Council hearing:

"I wasn't sure where to go for assistance. OPC provided me with various resources and most importantly, a caring and listening ear. The staff is not only professional and caring, but they also go the extra mile to ensure that those in need receive the help they need. OPC is doing an excellent job helping seniors like me to navigate

this new world of utilities and the various programs and resources that are available.”

If you need help with a water service or billing issue, contact the Water Services Division at (202) 727-3071.

Employee Spotlight:

Chawndise Battle is Painting Picture Perfect Consumer Services

OPC is always pleased to provide career opportunities to individuals who are hardworking and enthusiastic. Enter Chawndise Battle. She came on board about a year ago as a temporary employee while OPC phones were still ringing off the hook with people needing help as they attempted to catch up from challenges resulting from the pandemic.



A quick learner, who showed compassion for consumers, Chawndise became a full-time Intake Specialist this past November. Her responsibilities within the Consumer Services Division include collecting information from consumers that is placed in our database system so their complaints against utilities can be tracked and resolved in a timely manner.

"When desperate callers reach out to OPC for help, I believe it's important to put them at ease and explain they are in good hands with OPC," Chawndise stated. She also manages the division's calendar, schedules meetings, and assists with outreach events.

The native Washingtonian graduated from Coolidge Senior High School where she won medals in swimming. She's also crossed the finished line first at track meets. Chawndise's professional background includes working with Georgetown University's child development program, serving as a customer service lead at the Pentagon, and as a program specialist with the federal National Institute of Standards and Technology.

For fun, Chawndise enjoys skating and painting visuals of her life

OPC Working for You in Working Groups at the PSC



Continuing our series on working groups at the Public Service Commission, this month we feature Pepco's Productivity Improvement Work Group or "PIWG." The PSC set up PIWG to monitor the productivity of Pepco and its Productivity Improvement Plan (PIP). The PIP sets safety and reliability benchmarks for Pepco to meet. Using Pepco's annual Consolidated Report and the Manhole Events Report, the PSC can monitor if Pepco is meeting these benchmarks. The PIWG monitors these reports and makes recommendations to the PSC for measures Pepco can take to continue to reach the productivity goals.

OPC Connecting at the PSC



OPC is Advocating for Consumers in the Following Cases:

Formal Case No. 1174: WGL's Application to Issue \$650 million in Debt Securities.

OPC filed comments on December 5, 2022, requesting that WGL provide more information about its application, and filed reply comments on January 17, 2023, requesting that this case be consolidated with the rate increase case for the purposes of discovery. OPC had concerns that WGL is in violation of an AltaGas merger commitment because WGL had borrowed \$200 million in short-term notes from its affiliate.

The Commission granted the consolidation, and based on the discovery that was conducted, reduced the amount of debt securities the company can issue from \$650 million to \$450 million and reminded WGL it must comply with the merger commitments.

Formal Case No. 1169: WGL's Application to Increase Existing Rates and Charges for Gas Service

On March 24, OPC filed a Joint Motion with the Apartment and Office Building Association for Expedited Relief Concerning Order No. 21582, wherein the Commission determined that it would not hold evidentiary hearings in the WGL rate increase case proceedings. OPC and AOBA argued that the Commission's determination was unlawful, unsupported by the facts, and requested that the order be reversed or that additional time be allowed to file surrebuttal testimony, and the current procedural schedule be suspended.

On April 3, WGL requested that OPC's March 24 motion be rejected on the grounds that Order No. 21582 was not subject to a challenge on procedural grounds and argued the Commission should reject the filing of surrebuttal testimony and move forward with legislative hearings.

In an April 6 reply, OPC argued that WGL failed to address the issue raised in the March 24 motion, and whether the Commission held evidentiary hearings was not merely a matter of discretion, but a due process and statutory right of which District ratepayers should not be deprived.

The Consumer Connection

Capturing Feedback from the Community



"My experience with OPC has been nothing short of excellent. Many residents face challenges maintaining their utility bills, but OPC has robust consumer advocacy and services to assist them." By Joy Jones, nonprofit agency director, testifying at OPC's budget hearing.

OPC In Your Neighborhood!

OPC looks forward to seeing you in-person. We welcome the opportunity to speak at your Advisory Neighborhood Commission, civic association or community group meeting onsite or virtually. We can give updates on utility issues, trends, and outline how we serve. Call (202) 727-3071 if your group would like our staff to make a presentation onsite or "Zoom in." Contact the organizations directly if you would like links to attend any of the meetings we'll be visiting virtually.

Nineteenth Street Baptist Church
Older Americans Month Celebration
Wednesday, May 3
11:00 am - 3:00 pm
4606 16th Street, NW

Department of Aging & Community Living
Older Americans Month Celebration
Resource Fair and Fashion Show
Wednesday, May 10
11:00 am - 2:30 pm
Hattie Holmes Senior Wellness Center
324 Kennedy Street NW

AARP Penn Branch Chapter
Tuesday, May 23
11:00 am-12:00 pm
3935 Benning Road NE

Photo Gallery



OPC wishes Barbara Morgan (in all black), longtime Ward 7 community advocate, a happy 90th birthday.



Racheal Streeter of OPC's Water Services Division greets a visitor at the Turkey Thicket Recreation Center in Ward 5.



OPC's Jean Gross-Bethel is at George Washington University's Earth Day "Eco Bash."



What's in the bags? Show up Saturday at our climate summit at Catholic University and find out what the People's Counsel and staff have in store for you. [Sign up!](#)

Connect With OPC!

Do you have feedback or an idea for an article that could be featured in an upcoming edition of the OPC Connection? We want to hear from you! Just drop our editorial team an email @ info@opc-dc.gov or tweet us [@DCOPC](https://twitter.com/DCOPC).

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