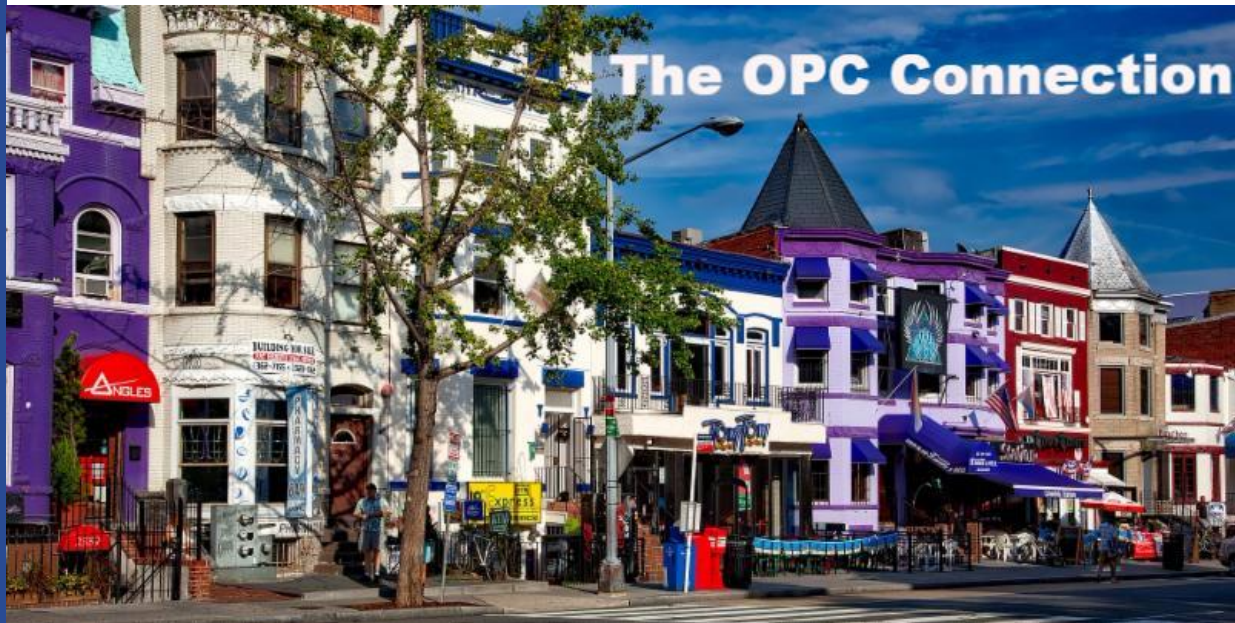




Office of the People's Counsel

ADVOCACY | EDUCATION | PROTECTION



September 2023

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



Due Process Matters

The stage is set for proceedings in the Pepco and Washington Gas rate increase cases pending before the DC Public Service Commission. The utilities are asking the Commission to approve tens of millions of dollars in rate increases that will add double digits to your monthly bills. OPC is advocating for the outcomes to be reasonable, just, in line with the District's climate and clean energy goals, and result in only the dollars necessary to provide quality and reliable service. Be sure to click on the links to see the fact sheets we have prepared on the [Pepco](#) and [Washington Gas](#) proposals.

The PSC held a first-of-its-kind, "legislative style" hearing on

September 13, where Washington Gas attorneys presented arguments to justify a \$53 million rate increase. They were followed by counterarguments by attorneys for OPC and other parties opposed to the gas company's excessive proposal and inadequate climate business plan.

OPC also has gone on the record as opposing the process under which the Commission is deciding both rate cases. Legislative hearings should not replace the long-standing evidentiary hearings that we believe afford ratepayers the due process they are entitled to. At the September Washington Gas [hearing](#), the Commissioners only heard from attorneys who at times were not equipped to respond to questions that would normally be answered by expert witnesses. At evidentiary hearings, subject matter and technical experts are given an opportunity to testify and respond to questions because they are prepared to present critical information. The experts are sworn-in by the PSC before they testify.

OPC believes legislative hearings instead of evidentiary hearings may be suited for non-adversarial matters but have no place in contested rate case proceedings. While legislative hearings may not take as much time, OPC contends it is not prudent to sacrifice consumers' due process for convenience. Evidentiary hearings are the appropriate format for making decisions in rate cases to ensure that District ratepayers are not subjected to unjust and unreasonable rate increases, and the rates remain within the means of District residents and businesses. **The experts are sworn-in by the PSC before they testify.**

OPC believes legislative hearings instead of evidentiary hearings may be suited for non-adversarial matters but have no place in contested rate case proceedings. While legislative hearings may not take as much time, OPC contends it is not prudent to sacrifice consumers' due process for convenience. Evidentiary hearings are the appropriate format for making decisions in rate cases to ensure that District ratepayers are not subjected to unjust and unreasonable rate increases, and the rates remain within the means of District residents and businesses.

ACT NOW: Apply for Utility Assistance

October 1 kicks off the fiscal year
2024 application season for DC

residents who want to renew or receive new utility bill payment assistance or emergency relief. Several programs are available through the DC Department of Energy and Environment (DOEE) and DC Water.



Income-eligible residents may apply for the **Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)** to receive between \$250 and \$1,800 as a one-time regular benefit. DOEE's online application may be the most efficient way to apply. Residents can also apply by email and fax. Click this [link](#) for details and the applications.

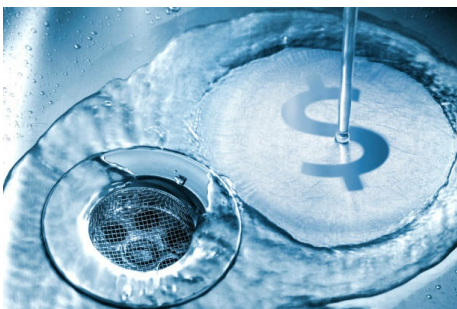
The **Utility Discount Program (UDP)**, processed by DOEE, helps residents reduce the utility bills of those who do not meet LIHEAP eligibility. Go to this [link](#) for UDP information.

DOEE also processes **DC Water Customer Assistance Program** applications for monthly discounts and emergency assistance through the **Clean Rivers Impervious Area Charge Residential Relief Program (CRIAC)**. Eligibility provides a discount percentage on a household's total monthly water fees and emergency assistance of up to \$2,000 if funds are available. CRIAC information is [here](#).

Applicants must provide the following documents:

- Copies of most recent utility bills
- Government-issued photo ID
- Proof of income for everyone in the home
- Social Security cards for everyone in the home, and
- Service disconnection notice (if applicable)

Contact DOEE through the Mayor's Call Center at 311; DC Water at (202) 354-3600 or OPC at (202) 727-3071 for additional information.



The Water Connection

OPC is Advocating for DC Water Consumers on Multiple Fronts

OPC's Water Services Division wants you to know about developments we are following on behalf of DC Water consumers:

- DC Water bill delinquencies are down, with total water debt owed by consumers reduced to \$27.7 million as of August 2023, down from \$31 million in December 2022. DC Water has also seen a decrease in the number of accounts delinquent for more than 90 days, down from 13,465 in December, to 10,495 on August 31, which is around the historic average. However, pandemic-era assistance programs are approaching their end, so OPC will stay vigilant in monitoring troubling trends in consumer water debt.
- The Northeast Boundary Tunnel was opened in September of this year and based upon performance during the recent tropical storm Ophelia, it is doing its job of preventing flooding and combined sewer overflows. The next phase of the Clean Rivers Initiative is the construction of the Potomac River Tunnel, which is in the contracting phase. However, due to rising costs over the past few years, the recommended contract award is more than \$819 million – the largest contract ever of the DC Water Board. Because of rising costs, DC Water will require an additional \$215 million to fund its construction. OPC has long advocated that construction cost overruns should not be funded by rate increases. As such, DC Water is looking for funding other than rates hikes. OPC will be deeply involved in next year's ratemaking process to ensure that stays the case.

**Celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month
September 15 – October 15
Save Energy with Simple Tips Year-Round**



Asesora Legal Pública, Sandra Mattavous-Frye

y

La Oficina de Asesoría Legal Pública del Distrito de Columbia
(OPC, Office of the People's Counsel, por sus siglas en inglés)



OPC se está preparando hoy para un mejor futuro de energía para todos

*OPC puede ayudarle a ahorrar energía y dinero
en facturas de servicios públicos*

Siga estos consejos:

- Utilice bombillas fluorescentes compactas en el interior y en el exterior.
- Apague las luces cuando no esté en el cuarto o instale detectores de movimiento que apaguen y prenden las luces.

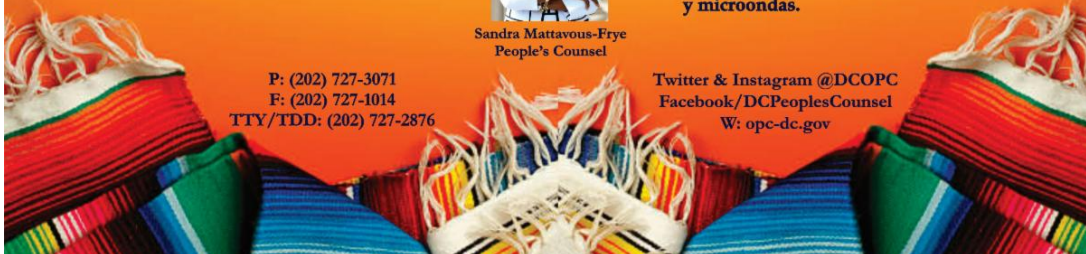


Sandra Mattavous-Frye
People's Counsel

- Lave la ropa en agua fría, que la deja tan limpia como el agua caliente.
- Utilice la secadora y el lavaplatos por la noche, cuando esta más fresco.
- Desenchufe pequeños aparatos, cargadores de teléfonos, tostadoras, y microondas.

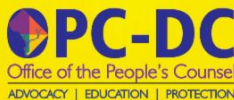
P: (202) 727-3071
F: (202) 727-1014
TTY/TDD: (202) 727-2876

Twitter & Instagram @DCOPC
Facebook/DCPeoplesCounsel
W: opc-dc.gov





*People's Counsel Sandra Mattavous-Frye
&
The Office of the People's Counsel
for the District of Columbia*



OPC is Preparing Today for a Better Energy Future for All

OPC can help you save energy and money on utility bills.

Follow these tips:

- Use compact fluorescent light bulbs inside and outside
- Turn off lights when not in a room or install motion detectors that turn lights off and on
- Wash clothes in cold water which gets them just as clean as hot water
- Use the clothes dryer and dishwasher in the evening when it's cooler
- Unplug small appliances, phone chargers, toasters, microwave ovens



Sandra Mattavous-Frye
People's Counsel

P: (202) 727-3071
F: (202) 727-1014
TTY/TDD: (202) 727-2876

Twitter & Instagram @DCOPC
Facebook/DCPeoplesCounsel
W: opc-dc.gov

OPC Working for You in Working Groups at the PSC



Continuing with our series, Working Groups at the Public Service

Commission, this month we focus on the Performance Incentive Mechanism (PIMS) Group. PIMS was an outgrowth of Formal Case 1156, the Application of Pepco to Implement a Multiyear Rate Plan. This working group was tasked to review performance metrics, performance baselines, performance targets, financial benefits, and the development of Energy Efficiency Performance

Tracking Mechanisms. This work is ongoing. After a full review of these items, a report is to be submitted to the PSC in the fall of this year.

OPC Connecting at the PSC



OPC is Advocating for Consumers in the Following Cases:

Formal Case No. 1176: Pepco's Application for Authority to Implement a Multiyear Rate Plan

On August 21, OPC filed a Response to Pepco's Motion for Enlargement of Time. OPC requested the PSC deny Pepco's Motion because it would alter the procedural schedule for this rate case and could be prejudiced against OPC.

On August 28, OPC filed a Reconsideration of Order No. 21886. OPC argues that the shortened procedural schedule does not allow OPC the time to review all the various parts of the proposed rate increase or allow due process.

Formal Case No. 1160: Development of Metrics for Electric Company and Gas Company Energy Efficiency and Demand Response Programs Pursuant to Section 201 (b) of the Clean Energy DC Omnibus Amendment Act of 2018

On August 28, OPC filed comments asking the PSC to consider the concerns mentioned in the reply and requested Pepco conduct another study on this matter.

Formal Case No. 1169: Washington Gas Light's Application to Increase Existing Rates and Charges

On September 1, OPC filed a Limited Brief in this rate case.

Formal Case No. 1156: Pepco's Application for Authority to Implement a Multiyear Rate Plan

On September 1, OPC filed a Response to Pepco's Application for Reconsideration. OPC requested the PSC deny Pepco's Application for Reconsideration as well as deny Pepco's recovery of expenses for the Benning Road Generating Station from ratepayers.

Formal Case No. 1171: Investigation into Community Renewable Energy Facility Practices

On September 1, OPC filed A Letter of Support for the DC Government's Response to Pepco's Motion to Amend the Enlargement of Time to Provide Additional Optionality for Meter Removal Solutions.

On September 13, OPC filed a Letter of Inquiry, along with the DC Government, into the appointment of an independent auditor, expressing concern about the PSC's delay in appointing an auditor.

Formal Case No.1017: Development and Designation of Pepco's Standard Offer Service

On September 5, OPC filed Comments on the 2023 Biennial Review of Standard Offer Service. The review is important to consumers as it allows oversight of the price Pepco pays for energy to supply its customers.



Employee Spotlight: Welcome Home, Alicia!

OPC staff have been seeing a lot more of Alicia Smith these days. For more than a decade, email and phone calls dominated her interactions with the agency. That's because until a few months ago, the Financial Specialist was primarily based at the Public Service Commission. There, she was responsible for developing and executing both the PSC's and OPC's budgets.

Now, we are happy to see Alicia's "face in the place," as she moved into the OPC-exclusive position of Resource Allocations Specialist in our Technical Division in March of this year. Alicia is responsible for developing and outlining documented operating policies and procedures related to agency funding requirements. Other duties include processing new consultant invoices and assisting with purchase card transactions.

A native Washingtonian, Alicia graduated from Eastern High School, where she got the opportunity to be a summer intern at the DC Department of Employment Services, working in finance. After she graduated in the top 10% of her class, Alicia went on to continue her financial services education at Charles County Community College and Strayer University, learning skills that have prepared her to tackle budget planning in the DC government.

When all the numbers make her eyes cross, Alicia loves to play board games and travel long distances with her family. When she comes off the road, OPC is happy to welcome Alicia home!

OPC In Your Neighborhood!

OPC welcomes opportunities to speak at your Advisory Neighborhood Commission, civic association, community group activity, or meeting onsite or virtually. We can give updates on utility issues, trends, and outline how we serve DC consumers. Call (202) 727-3071 if your group would like our staff to make a presentation onsite or "Zoom in." Below are some of the OPC staff members onsite at a community meeting, who look forward to your invitations.



Photo Gallery



People's Counsel Sandra Mattavous-Frye, OPC Attorney Ankush Nayar, Deputy People's Counsel Karen Sistrunk, and OPC Water Services Division Attorney Adam Carlesco give updates on utility issues at a Ward 3 community meeting.



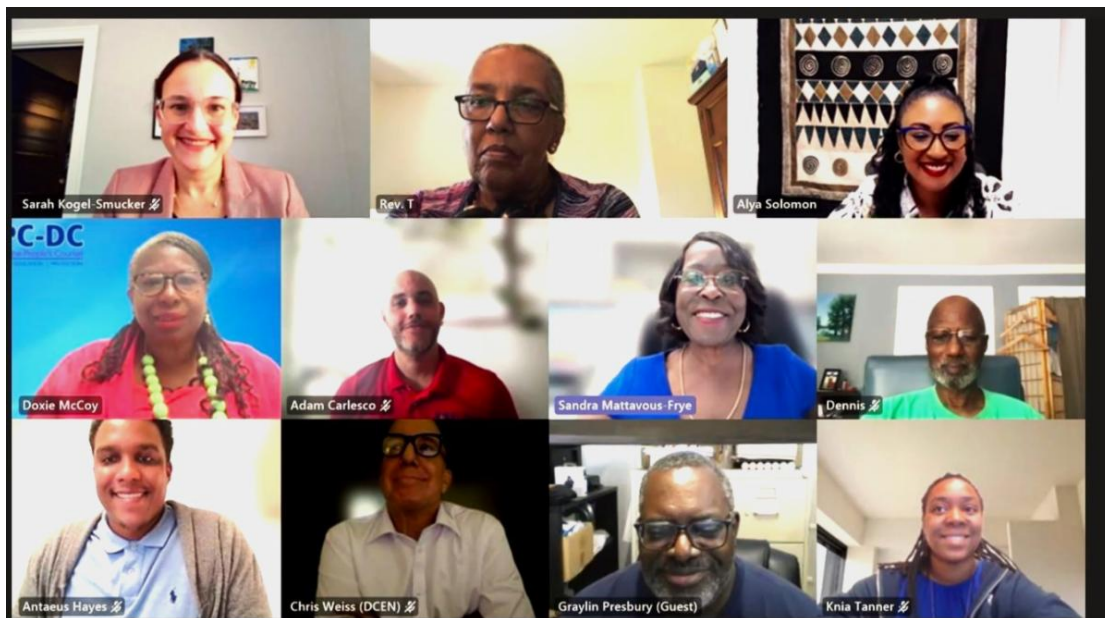
At the Ward 3 meeting, People's Counsel Mattavous-Frye with Brian Lederer, who was People's Counsel 1977 - 1984.



OPC staff brief At-large Councilmember Anita Bonds and her staff on utility assistance trends, Pepco and Washington Gas rate increases, and gas leaks, among other issues.



OPC External Affairs Officer Alya Solomon and People’s Counsel Sandra Mattavous-Frye speak with consumers after a DC Public Service Commission hearing.



Members of the OPC Utility Consumer Advocacy Network at their quarterly meeting with OPC staff. UCAN members keep OPC up to date on community buzz and receive staff updates on complaint trends, proposed rate increases, solar interconnection, and other hot issues.

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).

OPC Connection Editorial Team:

Doxie McCoy, Phillip Harmon, Quaneisha Glover, Chawndise Battle,
Dwayne Houston, Valca Valentine

Contributors:

Sandra Mattavous-Frye, Karen Sistrunk, Laurence Daniels,
Stephen Dudek, Adam Carlesco

The Office of the People's Counsel, 655 15th Street NW, Suite 200
Washington, DC 20005 | Tel: (202) 727-3071 | Fax: (202) 727-1014 |
TTY-TTD: (202) 727-2876
www.opc-dc.gov | info@opc-dc.gov

STAY CONNECTED



Office of the People's Counsel | 655 15th Street NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20005

[Unsubscribe info@opc-dc.gov](mailto:info@opc-dc.gov)

[Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data
Notice](#)

Sent by info@opc-dc.gov powered by



Try email marketing for free today!