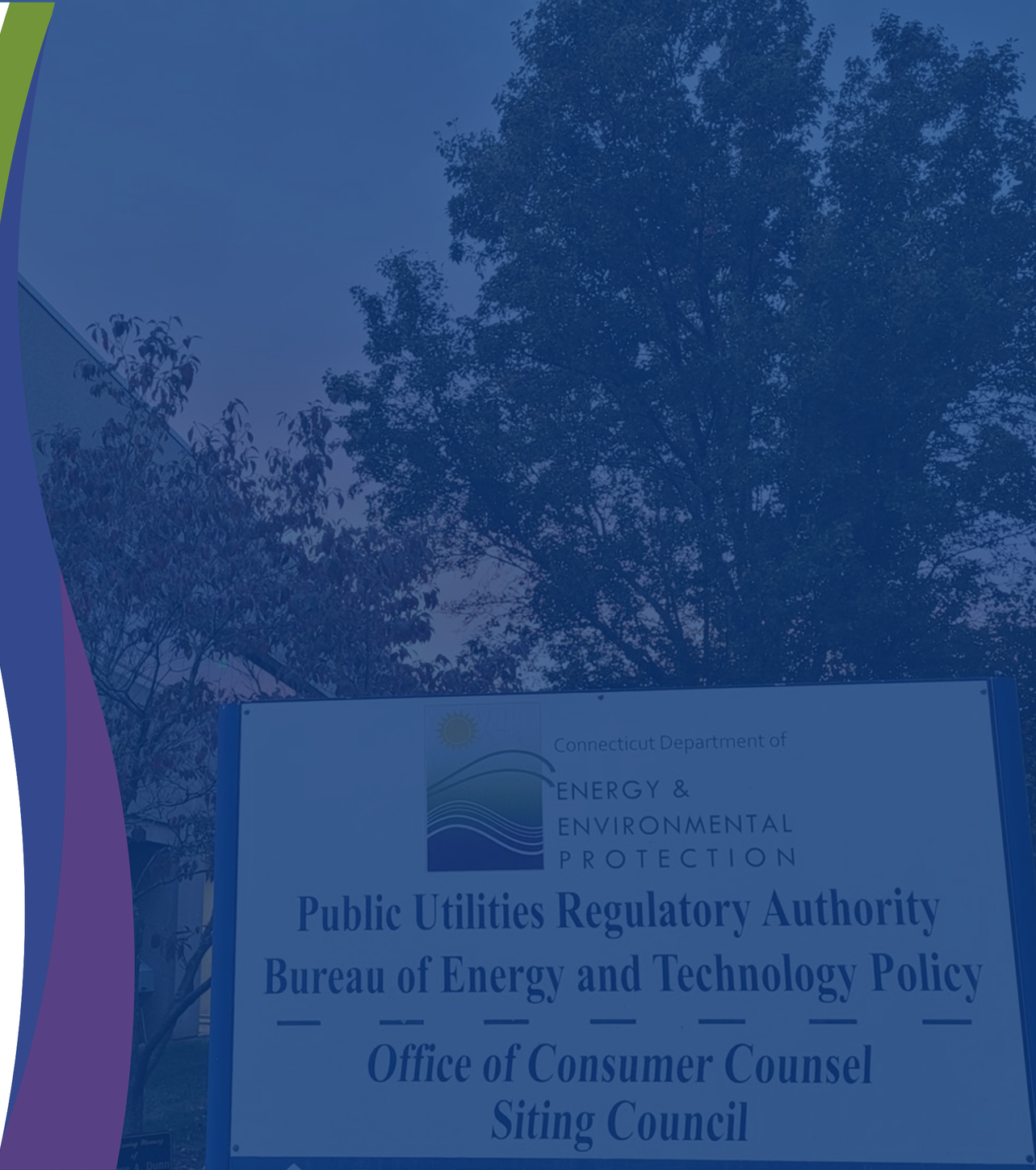
Connecticut Office of Consumer Counsel

Claire E. Coleman
Consumer Counsel

Connecticut Water Works Association
2026 Fall Conference
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The Office of Consumer Counsel

- Independent state agency established in 1975 to advocate for Connecticut's regulated utility customers
- Represents consumer interests in matters involving electric, natural gas, water and telecommunications services
- Advocates for safe, reliable utility services at 'just and reasonable' rates
- Authorized to represent consumers in any proceeding whether regulatory, judicial or legislative where matters involving utility services arise
- Works to ensure that consumer interests are considered in decisions affecting service, cost and public policy

Scope of OCC Role for Water Customers

- Regulated Water Utilities
- Public Water Authorities
- Rate and Regulatory Proceedings
- Policy Making and Legislative Advocacy
- Inv estigations of Utility Practices
- Litigation and Appeal s

Wate r Quality is a Shared Responsibility in Connecticut



OCC’s Focus on Balancing Competing Goals

Supporting responsible, necessary investments that deliver direct customer benefits at a just and reasonable cost



Reliability & Resilience

Replacing aging infrastructure on a scheduled basis, promoting climate preparedness/mitigation efforts, emergency preparedness and integrating new technologies for long term reliability



Quality Service

Prioritizing public health and drinking water safety standards, regulatory compliance and customer service



Affordability

Prudent investments in these priorities, pursuing alternatives to ratepayer dollars, and cost containment measures to sustain household budgets

OCC's Legislative Advocacy for Water Customers in Recent Proceedings

- **Protecting Customers from Unnecessary Costs (Public Act 23-1)**
  - Requirements to consider affordability when setting ROE
  - Prohibited recovery of Membership Dues, Lobbying Costs, and Ads
  - Authorized low-income discount rates

- **Supporting Low Income Assistance, with Cost-Containment (Public Act 25-142)**
  - Sets requirements for usage caps, budget targets, and eligibility recertification

- **Supporting Investment in Water Quality Treatment (Public Act 25-142)**
  - Water Quality and Treatment Adjustment -- a surcharge on bills to allow companies to recover needed infrastructure investments, particularly those needed to address emerging contaminants.

Connecticut’s Shifting Water Service Landscape

CT Regulated Water Companies

2015

- Aquarion Water Company of Connecticut
- Avon Water Company
- Connecticut Water Company
- Hazardville Water Company
- Heritage Village Water Company
- Jewett City Water Company
- Torrington Water Company
- Valley Water Company
- Miami Beach Water Company
- Old Newgate Ridge Water Company
- Preston Plains Water Company

Vs

2026

- Connecticut Water Company
- Hazardville Water Company
- Jewett City Water Company
- Preston Plains Water Company
- Old Newgate Ridge Water Company

Recent Regulated Water Utility Rate Cases

- **Change of Control Proceedings**:
  - **Aquarion Water Company → Authority** – (§§ 16-43 and 16-47) Advocated for maintaining critical customer protections under a new authority, challenged financial projections and customer rate impacts and highlighted long term affordability concerns.
  - **Natural Park Apartments** – (§§ 16-46, 16-262n, 16-262o) Application for acquisition of small community water system; pending before PURA.
- **Rate Cases:**
  - **Hazardville Water –** PURA approved a 13% increase in customer bills. Reflected OCC recommendations.
  - **Connecticut Water Company –** Includes $25 million rate increase request; Pending Decision

OCC's Focus on Water Affordability and Customer Assistance

- The role of the **Low Income Energy and Water Advisory Board (LIEWAB)** was expanded in 2024 to include assisting in the planning, development, implementation, and coordination of **water** assistance-related programs and policies.

- **Current Ratepayer-funded water assistance programs:**
  - The Aquarion Water Authority Low-Income Rate Assistance Program (LIRAP):
    - Provides a 15% on-bill discount for eligible customers who have an income below 60% of the state median income (SMI).
  - The Metropolitan District Commission (MDC):
    - Offers customers who make no more than 75% SMI an annual grant of up to $400 towards their past due water bill balance.
  - Connecticut Water Company's Water Rate Assistance Program (WRAP):
    - Income-eligible CT Water customers can qualify for a 10%, 40% or 80% reduction on their water bill depending on income eligibility

- **Restoring Federal Low Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP)**

Shared Priorities and Challenges Ahead



The Office of
Consumer Counsel

Thank You!

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