

# The Public Interest Is More Important Than Monopoly Profits

## Oppose SB 1280 and HB 2167



If passed, Senate Bill 1280 and House Bill 2167 would serve monopoly utilities at the expense of the public. They would weaken and politicize the Office of Public Counsel (OPC), shorten rate cases before the Public Service Commission (PSC), remove rights of the intervenors, and limit public participation in decisions that impact the pocketbooks of ratepayers.

### **Weakens Ability of OPC to Protect the Public Interest**

The OPC represents the public interest in relation to monopoly utilities. These bills would narrow the definition of public interest, excluding environmental protection and other interests. Also, by having the head of the OPC appointed by the Governor they would needlessly insert political maneuvering into the position.



### **Shortens Duration of Rate Cases at Expense of Public**

The bills would shorten the time for processing rate cases from eleven months to less than eight and give the utilities control of the agenda. The PSC, its Staff and other parties would have less time to investigate and contest the complex issues raised during rate cases that help the PSC make the best possible decisions on behalf of the public.

These bills favor settlements between utilities and PSC staff only, reached behind closed doors, at the expense of the public interest and public participation. We could expect such settlements to be the utilities' preferred method of deciding rate cases if these bills pass.

### **Reduces Right of Public to Intervene in Rate Cases**

Utilities are monopolies, and because of that status they are subject to more scrutiny than other industries. Customers and other interests have always had the right to intervene as parties in rate cases. These bills would limit the rights of intervenors to access information and raise any issues not raised by the utilities themselves. These bills appear to deny intervenors any recourse at all if they refuse to join a settlement that does not protect their interests. The bills limit the number of local public hearings at which customers can speak to a maximum of three. Utilities and the PSC should listen to input from those directly affected by their decisions.

House Bill 2167 is sponsored by Rep. O'Donnell. Senate Bill 1280 is sponsored by Sen. Cierpiot.