

CONSUMER ADVOCATE
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GOVERNOR AND COUNCIL CONFIRM NEW CONSUMER ADVOCATE

The Governor and Executive Council yesterday confirmed Meredith A. Hatfield, Esq. of Concord as the New Hampshire Consumer Advocate. Spokesperson Pamela Walsh said, "Governor Lynch nominated Meredith Hatfield for this position because she has broad experience in these areas and because he believes she will be an effective advocate."

Ms. Hatfield joins the Office of Consumer Advocate (OCA) after most recently practicing energy law with the Pierce Atwood firm in Concord. Previously, she served as program director with the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation and as public policy director for the Governor's Office of Energy and Community Services (now the Office of Energy and Planning). Ms. Hatfield brings a wealth of experience working with the New Hampshire Public Utilities Commission (PUC), utilities, and Legislature on energy and consumer issues. She helped create the statewide low-income electric assistance program and the "Core" electric energy efficiency programs and worked with the gas utilities to develop their efficiency and low income programs. Ms. Hatfield's prior advocacy includes the implementation of electric restructuring and the codification and development of the state's first energy plan.

Upon news of her confirmation, Ms. Hatfield stated, "I am honored to have the opportunity to serve the interests of New Hampshire's residential utility ratepayers. The rising cost of energy, changes in the telecommunications industry, and the increasing importance of water service are all critical issues for our state. I look forward to building on the strong advocacy foundation that the staff at the OCA has developed to advance the interests of our citizens."

The OCA is an independent state agency representing the interests of residential utility consumers in proceedings before any board, commission, agency, court, or regulatory body in which those interests are involved. The OCA is also charged with promoting and furthering the knowledge and education of residential consumers about utility issues. The statutory Residential Ratepayers Advisory Board (Board) assists the OCA in making important policy decisions and prioritizing the OCA's advocacy activities.

The staff of the OCA looks forward to working with and supporting Ms. Hatfield as she assumes the position and responsibilities of the Consumer Advocate. Larry Kelly, Executive Director of Tri-County Community Action Agency and Chair of the Board said of Ms. Hatfield's appointment, "The Board and the staff at the OCA join me in commending Governor Lynch and the Executive Council for making an excellent choice. We strongly believe that Ms. Hatfield will be an intelligent and productive advocate for NH's ratepayers."