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The Public Service Commission of Maryland was established by Chapter 180, Acts of 1910. The Commission consists of five Commissioners appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate, one of whom is designated as Chairperson (Chapter 756, Acts of 1976). The five Commissioners serve for six-year terms, with the Chairperson and two Commissioners being full time while two Commissioners may be part time. The General Counsel of the Commission is an attorney-at-law of the State and is appointed by and serves at the pleasure of the Commission (Chapter 756, Acts of 1976).

The Public Service Commission has jurisdiction over common carriers, including steam and electric railroads, sleeping car companies, bus lines, express companies, steamboat companies, power boats, ferry companies, carriers by aircraft, toll bridges, and all carriers, generally, engaged in the public transportation of passengers or freight within the State of Maryland, except those carriers of passengers that come within the jurisdiction of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Commission (Acts of 1959, Ch. 613). The Commission also has jurisdiction over all taxicabs operating in the City of Baltimore, Baltimore County, Cumberland, and Hagerstown. In addition, the Commission licenses the taxicab drivers in Baltimore City. The Commission also exercises jurisdiction over all gas, electric, telephone, telegraph, water, sewage disposal, heating, and refrigerating companies operating within the State. The Commission has the power to fix both minimum and maximum rates and to suspend schedules pending the determination of the reasonableness of the proposed rates. Public utilities may not abandon or discontinue the exercise of any franchise without permission of the Commission. The Commission tests all gas and electric meters before installation; it also tests previously installed meters at the request of the consumer. It maintains a laboratory in which it makes daily tests of gas furnished in the City of Baltimore. It also makes regular and frequent tests of the gas and electricity furnished in other parts of the State. It hears matters relative to 1) rate adjustments; 2) applications to exercise franchise; 3) approval of issuance of securities; 4) promulgation of new rules and regulations; 5) quality of utility and common carrier service; and 6) railroad safety. The Commission has the authority to issue a Certificate of Convenience and Necessity in connection with an electric utility's application to construct a new generating station or transmission lines of a certain capacity (Code 1957, Art. 78, secs. 1 to 107).

The Commission is also authorized to make joint investigations, hold joint hearings, and issue joint or other concurrent orders in conjunction with any official board or commission of any state or the Federal government under agreements and compacts between states, under the concurrent powers of states to regulate interstate commerce as an agency of the Federal government, or otherwise (Code 1957, Art. 78, sec. 59). The Public Service Commission is also represented on joint boards created by the Interstate Commerce Commission under the Federal Motor Carriers Act to hear and pass upon applications and proceedings pertaining to interstate motor carrier operation conducted in or through not more than three states.

By Chapter 234, Acts of 1973, the General Assembly provided for a new method of financing the operations of the Public Service Commission. The filing fee of .0009 percent imposed on gross intrastate utility operating revenues was repealed. In its place utilities and common carriers under the jurisdiction of the Commission are assessed a proportionate share of the Commission's direct and indirect expenses based on their proportion of jurisdictional revenues.

The Office of People's Counsel operates independently from the Commission and may participate in all proceedings before the Commission. People's Counsel represents the interests of the Maryland consumers generally before the Commission and facilitates their inquiries on specific utility complaints. The People's Counsel may appear before any federal or State agency as necessary to protect the interests of residential or noncommercial users (Chapter 756, Acts of 1976). The Office of People's Counsel may utilize existing staff of the Commission, and may also retain additional expert witnesses to testify in various proceedings before the Commission.

Chapter 860, Acts of 1978, created a Utility Consumer Advisory Panel within the Public Service Commission. The Panel consists of thirteen public members geographically representative of the utility consuming public, seven of whom are appointed by the President of the Senate and six of whom are appointed by the Speaker of the House of Delegates. The term of membership is three years, except that of the original appointees four shall serve one-year terms, four shall serve two-year terms, and five shall serve three-year terms as determined by lot within each category. The Panel annually elects a chairperson from its membership and appoints a secretary. The Utility Consumer Advisory Panel is to advise the Public Service Commission on general goals for the development of programs, undertake studies and issue reports,