

NOTICE OF WORKSHOP ON PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

**SEPTEMBER 13TH 2011
1:30 pm to 4:30 pm**

**California Public Utilities Commission Auditorium
State Office Building
505 Van Ness Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94102**

The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) invites you to attend a workshop on the challenges/opportunities for improving public participation in its decision-making processes.

This workshop will be facilitated by Commissioner Mike Florio, organized by CPUC's Public Advisor's Office (PAO) with participation by the Administrative Law Judges (ALJ) Division.

The CPUC regulates privately owned electric, natural gas, communications, water, railroad, rail transit, and passenger transportation companies, in addition to authorizing video franchises. Our five Governor-appointed Commissioners, as well as our staff, are dedicated to ensuring that all interested individuals are given opportunity to participate in our decision-making processes. There are many opportunities to participate in our processes, ranging from providing your opinion by a phone call or in writing (email or letter) through becoming an active participant in a formal process.

PAO provides procedural information and advice to individuals and groups who want to participate in formal CPUC proceedings; reviews and approves utility bill inserts and notices; facilitates Public Participation Hearings (PPH) for the ALJ Division; consults with Commissioners on how to improve public participation and keeps them informed of barriers that prevent effective public participation; and, provides programs and services to educate and assist the public, including special accommodations and interpreter services.

The ALJ Division has the responsibility for conducting public hearings, such as PPH to receive public input used by the CPUC's decision-makers.

CPUC values and welcomes input from all interested parties, in order to make better informed decisions that reflect the views of the public it serves. As such, one of its goals is to increase public participation. This workshop will provide the opportunity for an open discussion on the challenges to public participation, and proposals for improvements. The CPUC recognizes that external stakeholders such as community based organizations, intervenors, consumers and utilities are integral to the decision-making process, and as such, participation in this workshop by all interested parties is critical to a fruitful discussion.

KEY TOPIC AREAS TO BE DISCUSSED AT THE WORKSHOP

Improving and Expanding Noticing of PPHs

The first key topic to be discussed at the workshop will be improving and expanding noticing of PPHs. The processes by which the PAO currently provides notice of PPHs are driven in large part by the CPUC Rules of Practice and Procedure, directives by Commissioners and ALJs, statutes and historical practice. Many of the policies and practices followed today were implemented prior to:

- availability of the myriad of technologies commonly used today. Technology has not only changed the ways information can be delivered, it has also changed the ways in which many consumers are receptive to receiving and acting upon information;
- increased focus on effective communication to non-English speaking, disabled and other hard to reach consumers;
- consumers receiving and paying utility bills electronically, resulting in many consumers no longer receiving bill inserts, which are currently the primary vehicle by which the CPUC and utilities provide notice of PPHs and workshops to consumers.

The CPUC is eager to consider ways that the PPH noticing process and outreach on PPHs can be improved to incorporate new technologies, and to

consider proposals on different ways to effectively communicate with consumers.

Adding Value to PPHs

The second topic area that will be explored at the workshop is adding value to PPHs, so that consumers who hear about the PPH will want to take the time to attend and participate. Suggestions from CPUC staff and external stakeholders include:

- combining PPHs with events such as bill fairs, which provide consumers the opportunity to get assistance on billing issues and complaints; combining with other consumer focused events such as light bulb exchanges; and coordinating with cities or counties to include information on consumer focused services provide by those entities.
- clarifying for consumers how their comments made at PPHs will be used by the ALJ and Commissioners in the decision-making process.
- considering the benefits of increasing the accessibility of PPHs through webcasting and other means of broadcasting.

Encourage Public Input/Participation Through Informal Written Comments

The third topic to be discussed is how to encourage public input/participation through informal written comments. Many consumers who receive notice of PPHs cannot attend but still would like to provide comments to the CPUC. Suggestions include:

- providing expanded information in new noticing processes on the opportunity to provide informal written comments;
- clarifying for consumers how their informal written comments will be used by the ALJ and Commissioners in the decision-making process;
- create new avenues for advertising the ability to participate by providing informal written comments.

INVITATION TO ATTENDEES TO PROVIDE INPUT PRIOR TO SETTING WORKSHOP AGENDA AND PROPOSING DESIGNATED SPOKESPERSONS

Stakeholders planning to attend the workshop are invited to send in writing proposals, issues, or questions they suggest should be addressed in the workshop. Suggestions will be considered for inclusion in the final agenda. The suggestions can be e-mailed to the public advisor at karen.miller@cpuc.ca.gov. We will post comments we receive on our website www.cpuc.ca.gov/PPHWorkshop. The deadline for submitting these suggestions is 5:00 pm, August 18, 2011.

The PAO is in the process of finalizing speakers for the workshop. Stakeholders who hold similar positions and plan to present similar information are requested to select a proposed spokesperson for their combined organizations. When proposing a spokesperson, please list the organizations which the spokesperson would be representing. Please email your proposals for speakers to the Public Advisor at karen.miller@cpuc.ca.gov. The deadline for proposing spokespersons is the same as for providing suggestions for the agenda, 5:00 pm, August 18, 2011.

There may be a quorum of Commissioners at this workshop; however, there will be no voting or conducting of regular Commission business.

This workshop will be webcast. You can view the webcast live or after the event by visiting <http://www.californiaadmin.com/cpuc.shtml>.

American Sign Language interpreters will be provided at the workshop. If you need language interpreters, or if you require special accommodations, please send an email to public.advisor@cpuc.ca.gov or call 415-703-2074.

If you have any questions, please contact the Public Advisor, Karen Miller, at karen.miller@cpuc.ca.gov or 415-703-2074.