



OLR RESEARCH REPORT

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QUESTIONS FOR PUBLIC UTILITIES AUTHORITY DIRECTOR NOMINEE

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PUBLIC UTILITIES REGULATORY AUTHORITY (PURA)

- PURA, formerly the Department of Public Utility Control (DPUC), is governed by three directors; the nominee is a sitting director.
- Directors are appointed by the governor with the consent of both chambers of the legislature.
- The authority, part of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), is responsible for regulating electric, gas, water, and telecommunications companies.

QUESTIONS

1. What can be done to address Connecticut's electric rates, which are among the highest in the United States even though they have fallen in recent years?
2. In light of the storms of the last two years, how can the state ensure reliable electric service? Should the electric utilities be given more authority to trim trees, including those on private property, that may jeopardize utility lines?
3. Should the state modify the renewable portfolio standard, which requires electric companies and competitive suppliers to get part of their power from renewable resources? Should large-scale hydropower, such as that generated in Quebec, count as a class I renewable resource?
4. DEEP's draft comprehensive energy strategy includes several measures to encourage the use of natural gas. These include using gas ratepayer funds to encourage people to switch from oil to natural gas for home heating and other uses in light of low gas prices. Historically, this has not been permitted as a matter of policy. Should this policy change?
5. DEEP denied PURA's request for additional time to comment on the draft strategy. To what extent, if any, did this restrict the scope or quality of PURA's comments?
6. Should residential consumers be able to choose their gas supplier in the same way as they can choose their electric supplier?
7. Should energy conservation programs operate, as some suggest, on a "fuel-blind" basis, where all the funds that are currently used for efficiency programs are pooled and spent in a way that maximizes efficiency regardless of how a building is heated?
8. Much of the country is experiencing a severe drought. To what extent is the state prepared for an extended drought? What should the state do to prepare for weather extremes, which may become more common as a result of climate change?

9. The water industry has seen steadily declining sales as a result of increased water efficiency and changes in the state's economic structure. As a result, many water companies have been unable to earn the rate of return on their investments that PURA has found to be just and reasonable. What should the legislature or PURA do under these circumstances?
10. Has the transition from DPUC to PURA been smooth? Are there any outstanding problems? Are legislative changes needed?
11. The law requires PURA to be "guided by" DEEP policy? To what extent should DEEP be able to direct PURA decisions, particularly in areas that affect utility rates?

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