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 **OFFICE OF CONSUMER COUNSEL**

 NEWS RELEASE

######  **Acting Consumer Counsel Richard E. Sobolewski**

###### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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|  **ACTING CONSUMER COUNSEL RICHARD E. SOBOLEWSKI APPLAUDS** **PURA DECISION IMPOSING COMPREHENSIVE MARKETING STANDARDS ON THIRD-PARTY ELECTRIC SUPPLIERS** ***New Marketing Standards Afford Robust Protections to Consumers and Increase Accountability Among Third-Party Suppliers*****NEW BRITAIN, Conn. (May 6, 2020)** – Acting Consumer Counsel Richard E. Sobolewski announced today the Office of Consumer Counsel’s (OCC) overwhelming support for a [Final Decision](http://www.dpuc.state.ct.us/DOCKCURR.NSF/0/e0d2ecaa643017d7852585600060b010/%24FILE/140720RE01-050620.pdf) of the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA) that institutes a comprehensive set of marketing standards applicable to all third-party electric suppliers doing business in Connecticut. Today’s PURA decision is the result of a years long proceeding ordered by the General Assembly in 2014 that received robust input from OCC, the Attorney General, the electric distribution companies, and many third-party suppliers. “Today’s PURA decision is the culmination of years of hard work,” said Acting Consumer Counsel Sobolewski. “Once these marketing standards are fully implemented, Connecticut consumers will be more protected from duplicitous marketing tactics and third-party suppliers who engage in such activity will be more accountable than ever before.” “Connecticut electric customers should take today’s decision to heart,” said OCC Staff Attorney Andrew W. Minikowski. “These marketing standards make one thing clear: among those states with deregulated electricity markets, Connecticut consumers now enjoy the most comprehensive consumer protections in the entire country. Once again, Connecticut has demonstrated its leadership in safeguarding consumers from unscrupulous conduct.” In recent years, both PURA and the General Assembly have taken action to crack down on deceptive and unfair marketing practices by third-party suppliers engaging in telemarketing and door-to-door sales. PURA’s decision imposing new marketing standards goes further, requiring all third-party electric suppliers doing business in Connecticut to: 1. Monitor and self-report marketing violations;
2. Record all door-to-door and telesales transactions and retain recordings for three years;
3. Outfit all door-to-door sales agents with GPS tracking technology;
4. Display accurate caller and area code caller identification information on all telesales calls;
5. Provide sufficient notice to PURA in advance of assigning customers to another third-party supplier;
6. Directly train all third-party sales agents marketing on behalf of a third-party supplier;
7. Abide by increased third-party verification standards;
8. Accurately disclose current and pending utility standard service rates to customers;
9. Abide by increased consumer disclosures, including, that third-party suppliers are not affiliated with an electric distribution company, are not affiliated with a state program, that consumers are not instructed to obtain their bill at the outset of a transaction, that the purpose of telesales or door-to-door interactions is for marketing, that a customer may cancel a contract with a third-party supplier at will, etc.
10. Respond to all customer complaints within three days.

All third-party suppliers must comply with the marketing standards by August 6, 2020. Members of the public with questions regarding the new marketing standards or the third-party retail supply market generally are encouraged to contact OCC by phone at 860-827-2900 or via e-mail at occ.info@ct.gov. Likewise, consumers with specific complaints regarding third-party suppliers may contact PURA by calling 1-800-382-4568 (toll free within Connecticut); 1-860-827-2622 (outside Connecticut); or TDD 860-827-2837. As always, OCC encourages all electric customers to regularly review their bills. Acting Consumer Counsel Sobolewski thanked his staff involved in this matter, especially Attorney Andrew W. Minikowski, Utilities Examiner Dave Thompson, Economist John R. Viglione, and all prior OCC staff who contributed to this proceeding.  |
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*The Office of Consumer Counsel (OCC) is the State of Connecticut’s advocate for consumers on issues relating to electricity, natural gas, water, and telecommunications. For more information, visit* [*www.ct.gov/occ*](http://www.ct.gov/occ)*.*