

# Public Input Hearings

## Pa. American Water (PAWC)

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**Pennsylvania Utility Law Project**



# Pennsylvania Utility Law Project

PULP is a statewide legal services project of Regional Housing Legal Services (RHLS) and is a member of the Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network (PLAN).

PULP's mission is to secure just and equitable access to safe and affordable utility services for Pennsylvanians experiencing poverty.

We work to achieve our mission by empowering individuals and communities through:

- Legal Representation, Groups, and Individuals
- Education and Training
- Policy Advocacy
- Supportive Services
- Consultation



# PAWC's Rate Increase Proposal

- On Nov. 8, 2023, PAWC submitted a request to the Pa. Public Utility Commission (PUC) to increase its rates for basic water and wastewater services by approximately \$203.9 million – or 20.2%.
  - In addition to this requested increase in rates, PAWC is also proposing to add several additional monthly charges to the bill.
- PULP formally represents a coalition of low income consumers, known as the Coalition for Affordable Utility Services and Energy Efficiency in Pennsylvania (CAUSE-PA), in this proceeding.
- A series of Public Input Hearings (PIHs) will be held related to PAWC's rate increases and proposals.

# Understanding the PA Public Utility Commission

## What is the PA PUC?

- Regulatory agency in Pennsylvania
- Balances consumer and utility interests
- Ensures safe, reliable, and affordable utility services
- Maintains standards for utilities
- **Resource:** [www.puc.pa.gov](http://www.puc.pa.gov)

# What is the Importance of a Public Input Hearing?

- Frontline, BIPOC, and low-income communities are historically excluded from utility decision-making spaces.
- Public Input Hearings allow interested individuals to:
  - Provide on-the-record testimony, that can be considered by the judge in the case.
  - Have flexibility to testify on- or off-the-record.
  - Participate in Decision-Making
  - Voice their concerns about the utility's rates, service quality, policies, and/or programs.

# PAWC's Rate Case – Public Input Hearings

## **In-Person -- Port Vue**

**Monday, January 29, 2024, 1:00 PM and 6:00 PM**

Port Vue Social Hall

1191 Romine Avenue, Port Vue, PA 15133

## **In-Person – Scranton**

**Tuesday, January 30, 2024, 1:00 PM and 6:00 PM**

Scranton Cultural Center

420 N. Washington Avenue, Scranton, PA 18503

## **In-Person – Reading**

**Wednesday, January 31, 2024, 1:00 PM and 6:00 PM**

Dunn Community Center

4565 Prestwick Drive, Reading, PA 19606

## **Telephonic**

**Monday, February 5, 2024, 1:00 PM and 6:00 PM**

## **In-Person – Harrisburg**

**Tuesday, February 6, 2024, 1:00 PM and 6:00 PM**

Hearing Room 1

Keystone Building, 400 North Street, Harrisburg, PA  
17120

## **Telephonic**

**Wednesday, February 7, 2024, 1:00 and 6:00 PM**

# PAWC's Rate Case – PIH Registration

## FOR IN-PERSON PUBLIC INPUT HEARINGS:

- If you wish to testify, you are **encouraged** to pre-register with the Office of Consumer Advocate (OCA) prior to your hearing date.
- Pre-registrants who provide their information (see next slide) will be called to testify at the hearing in the order in which they pre-register.
- If you do not pre-register for the in-person hearings, you may be able to sign up to testify at the hearing if time allows.

## FOR TELEPHONIC PUBLIC INPUT HEARINGS:

- If you wish to testify, you **must** pre-register with the OCA by **Thursday, February 1, 2024** to receive call-in information.
- Individuals will testify in the order in which they pre-register.
- If you do not wish to testify but want to listen to the public input hearing, you may also contact the OCA to obtain the call-in information.

# PAWC's Rate Case – PIH Registration (Cont.)

- To pre-register, please contact the OCA by phone at 1.800.684.6560 or by email at [consumer@paoca.org](mailto:consumer@paoca.org) and provide:
  - (1) your first and last name;
  - (2) date and time of the PIH;
  - (3) a phone number where you can be reached prior to the hearing;
  - (4) your email address (if available); and
  - (5) if you require an interpreter to participate, the language of the interpreter.
- Requests for Interpreters: If you require an interpreter, please pre-register as soon as possible.
- Hearing Exhibits: If you wish to refer to exhibits during the hearing, please email them to the OCA at [consumer@paoca.org](mailto:consumer@paoca.org).



# Attending a Public Input Hearing

- You will be asked if you're a customer of the utility involved in the rate proceeding.
- You will be asked if you want to testify **under oath** (“on the record”).
  - If you testify under oath, you will be asked to raise your right hand and swear that your testimony is the truth and nothing but the truth.
  - If you do not testify under oath, the judge cannot consider your testimony when they make a decision in the case.
- When you're finished with your testimony, attorneys from any of the parties in the case may ask you questions (“cross examination”).

# What are some helpful tips for participating in a Public Input Hearing?

Participants in a PIH should share their experiences related to the utility's rates and services, including:

- What the rate increase would mean to them, their family, and their communities;
- Experiences related to paying monthly bills for the utility;
- Experiences with services and service quality;
- For low-income customers, experiences with low-income assistance programs (e.g. effectiveness and challenges of programs).

# What are some other helpful tips for participating in a Public Input Hearing?

- **Arrive Early:** Show up 15 minutes before the hearing to hear introductions.
- **Choose if Swearing In:** Your testimony only becomes part of the official record if you are sworn in as a witness. You may choose to testify off the record.
- **Sign In:** Register to testify when you arrive. The judge may call witnesses in the order they sign in.
- **Prepare Your Statement:** Though not required, preparing a written statement is a good idea, and there's no harm in reading it aloud.
- **Be Specific and Stay Focused:** Make your presentation as specific as possible to ensure clarity and emphasize key points. Try to avoid dwelling on repeated points; instead, represent different perspectives or show broader implications.
- **Speak Clearly:** Speak slowly and calmly to ensure your message is understood.
- **Ask for Clarification:** If you are asked a question that you are unsure of or don't understand, ask for clarification.

# Resources:

Pennsylvania Office Of Consumer Advocate

Address: 555 Walnut Street, 5th Floor Forum Place Harrisburg, PA 17101-1923

Phone: 717-783-5048

Toll Free: 800-684-6560

Fax: 717-783-7152

Email: [consumer@paoca.org](mailto:consumer@paoca.org)

Pennsylvania Utility Law Project (PULP): [pulp@pautilitylawproject.org](mailto:pulp@pautilitylawproject.org)