

Public Service Commission of Utah

Jerry D. Fenn, Chair

Presentation to the Retirement and
Independent Entities Interim Committee of the
Utah Legislature

November 19, 2024

History

The Utah Legislature, in its Public Utilities Act of 1917, created the Public Service Commission of Utah (originally as the “Public Utilities Commission of Utah”). Governor Simon Bamberger signed the Act on March 8, 1917, and the Public Service Commission (PSC) was officially organized on April 3, 1917.

In 1983, the Legislature reorganized utility regulation again, establishing the PSC as an independent state agency and providing a technical staff whose function was solely to advise the PSC.

The primary responsibility of the PSC is to regulate public utilities to ensure safe, reliable, adequate, and reasonably priced utility service. It conducts hearings and investigations of utility company operations in order to determine just and reasonable rates for such service.

PSC Staff Composition

- Three commissioners appointed to staggered 6-year terms:
 - Jerry D. Fenn, Chair
 - David R. Clark, Commissioner
 - John S. Harvey, Ph.D., Commissioner
- PSC Secretary – Gary Widerburg
- PSC Executive Staff Director – Yvonne R. Hogle
- Eleven (11) additional legal and technical employees, plus three (3) employees in the Relay Utah program.

PSC Duties and Obligations

The PSC has responsibilities impacting the citizens and businesses of the State of Utah. The PSC is statutorily charged with the power and jurisdiction to supervise and regulate every public utility in the State of Utah. In performing its duties, the PSC has been granted broad, plenary powers to conduct investigations, hold hearings, issue subpoenas, compel attendance, receive evidence and issue orders and rulings consistent with the public interest and secure compliance with orders it issues. The PSC determines whether rates and charges of a public utility are unjust, unreasonable, discriminatory, preferential, or otherwise in violation of any provisions of law. In performing its duties, the PSC performs judicial and quasi-judicial functions.

Reporting to the Legislature

Annually, in January, the PSC publishes its annual report and submits it to the Legislature. The PSC's Annual Report (link at psc.utah.gov/annual-report):

- provides general summaries of the four main public services the PSC regulates including electricity, natural gas, telecommunications, and water/waste services, and
- describes the filings submitted by public utilities with the PSC, including corresponding dockets and key technical conferences and legislation or rulemaking that occurred over the fiscal year immediately preceding the publication of the annual report.

Purpose of the PSC

Public Utility Regulation: The mission of the PSC is to provide fair and transparent regulation, ensuring and balancing the following objectives:

- just and reasonable rates;
- safe and reliable utility service; and
- financially healthy utilities.

Utah Universal Service Fund (UUSF)

- Consistent with Utah Code Section 54-8b-15, the PSC distributes funds from surcharges paid on Utah telephone accounts to enable qualifying carriers of last resort to obtain specific, predictable, and sufficient funds to deploy and manage networks capable of providing access lines, connections, and broadband service.
- The UUSF funds two additional programs:
- Relay Utah: This program provides telecommunications access and equipment to those who are deaf, hard of hearing, and speech-challenged.
- Lifeline: A low-income assistance program where qualifying recipients receive either a discount off their monthly bill or, in the case of some wireless providers, a complete basic service, including internet access.



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Jerry D. Fenn
jdfenn@utah.gov

David R. Clark
drexclark@utah.gov

John S. Harvey, Ph.D.
jsharvey@utah.gov

Heber M. Wells Building
160 East 300 South, 4th Floor
Salt Lake City, UT 84111

Phone: 801-530-6716
Fax: 801-530-6796
Toll Free 866-772-8824
psc@utah.gov