

Chapter 217

**(House Bill 35)**

AN ACT concerning

**Public Service Commission – Hearing Examiners – Change of Job Title**

FOR the purpose of changing the job title of “hearing examiners” of the Public Service Commission to “public utility law judges”; making conforming changes; and generally relating to the Public Service Commission.

BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,

Article – Public Utilities

Section 2–105(c)(1), 2–108(d)(5) and (8)(ii)6. and (e)(5), 2–303(a), 2–306(b), 2–307(a), 2–308(a), 3–104(a), (b), and (d), 3–108, and 3–113(d)

Annotated Code of Maryland

(2010 Replacement Volume and 2014 Supplement)

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND, That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

**Article – Public Utilities**

2–105.

(c) The Executive Director shall:

(1) direct and coordinate the technical staff, except [hearing examiners] **PUBLIC UTILITY LAW JUDGES**, of the Commission; and

2–108.

(d) (5) (i) As required, the Commission shall hire [hearing examiners] **PUBLIC UTILITY LAW JUDGES**.

(ii) [Hearing examiners] **PUBLIC UTILITY LAW JUDGES** are a separate organizational unit and shall report directly to the Commission.

(8) (ii) The following are in the executive service, management service, or are special appointments in the State Personnel Management System:

6. the chief [hearing examiner] **PUBLIC UTILITY LAW JUDGE**; and

(e) The compensation of the following personnel shall be determined by the Commission and, if possible, in accordance with the State pay plan:

- (5) the chief [hearing examiner] **PUBLIC UTILITY LAW JUDGE**;

2–303.

(a) This section applies to each individual subject to § 2–302 of this subtitle and to:

(1) each spouse, dependent child, parent, brother, or sister of each commissioner, the People’s Counsel, the General Counsel, and [a hearing examiner] **EACH PUBLIC UTILITY LAW JUDGE**; and

(2) each spouse or dependent child of each other officer or employee of the Commission or Office of People’s Counsel.

2–306.

(b) Until at least 1 year has passed after leaving service with the Commission as the General Counsel or a [hearing examiner] **PUBLIC UTILITY LAW JUDGE**, an individual may not:

(1) represent a public service company before the Commission;

(2) appear before the Commission on behalf of a party to a Commission proceeding; or

(3) appear before the Commission on a matter within the jurisdiction of the Commission.

2–307.

(a) This section applies to each individual subject to § 2–302 of this subtitle and to:

(1) each spouse, dependent child, parent, brother, or sister of each commissioner, the People’s Counsel, the General Counsel, and [a hearing examiner] **EACH PUBLIC UTILITY LAW JUDGE**; and

(2) each spouse or dependent child of each other officer or employee of the Commission or Office of People’s Counsel.

2–308.

(a) This section applies to each individual subject to § 2–302 of this subtitle and to:

(1) each spouse, dependent child, parent, brother, or sister of each commissioner, the People’s Counsel, the General Counsel, and [a hearing examiner] **EACH PUBLIC UTILITY LAW JUDGE**; and

(2) each spouse or dependent child of each other officer or employee of the Commission or Office of People’s Counsel.

3–104.

(a) (1) The Commission shall institute and conduct proceedings reasonably necessary and proper to the exercise of its powers or the performance of its duties.

(2) The Commission shall conduct its proceedings en banc or in panels of:

(i) at least three commissioners; or

(ii) one [hearing examiner] **PUBLIC UTILITY LAW JUDGE** and at least two commissioners.

(3) A quorum consists of a majority of the Commission or a majority of a panel.

(b) (1) The Commission, a commissioner, or a [hearing examiner] **PUBLIC UTILITY LAW JUDGE** may conduct hearings, examine witnesses, administer oaths, and perform any other acts necessary to the conduct of proceedings.

(2) The Executive Secretary of the Commission may administer oaths.

(3) Each record of a proceeding of the Commission is a public record.

(d) (1) The Commission may delegate to a commissioner or to a [hearing examiner] **PUBLIC UTILITY LAW JUDGE** the authority to conduct a proceeding that is within the Commission’s jurisdiction.

(2) In a delegated proceeding, the commissioner or [hearing examiner] **PUBLIC UTILITY LAW JUDGE** shall:

(i) conduct the hearing and any other proceeding that the commissioner or [hearing examiner] **PUBLIC UTILITY LAW JUDGE** considers necessary; and

(ii) file with the Commission, and simultaneously serve on all parties, a proposed order and findings of fact.

(3) The proposed order shall become final unless appealed as provided in § 3–113(d) of this subtitle.

3–108.

Unless notice is provided to each other party in a case before the Commission, a party or person acting on behalf of a party may not contact ex parte a commissioner or a [hearing examiner] **PUBLIC UTILITY LAW JUDGE** regarding the merits of the case.

3–113.

(d) (1) An order of a panel constituted under § 3–104(a) of this subtitle is final.

(2) (i) A proposed order of a commissioner or [hearing examiner] **PUBLIC UTILITY LAW JUDGE** under § 3–104(d) of this subtitle becomes final unless a party to the proceeding notes an appeal with the Commission within the time period for appeal designated in the proposed order.

(ii) The time period for appeal designated in the proposed order is 30 days unless the order specifies a shorter period of at least 7 days.

(3) On appeal, the Commission promptly shall:

(i) consider the matter on the record before the commissioner or [hearing examiner] **PUBLIC UTILITY LAW JUDGE**;

(ii) conduct any further proceedings that it considers necessary including requiring the filing of briefs and the holding of oral argument; and

(iii) issue a final order.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect October 1, 2015.

**Approved by the Governor, May 12, 2015.**