

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2015 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

Senate Bill 11

(Senators Astle and Middleton)

Finance

Economic Matters

Public Service Commission - Hearing Examiners - Change of Job Title

This bill changes the job title of “hearing examiner” of the Public Service Commission (PSC) to “public utility law judge.”

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. The bill does not require any changes in salary or compensation.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law/Background: The Hearing Examiner Division conducts formal proceedings in matters referred by PSC and files proposed orders with the commission. Proposed orders become final orders, generally after 30 days, unless a party to the proceeding notes an appeal with the commission, after which the commission must promptly consider the matter and conduct any further proceedings that it considers necessary.

Hearing Examiner Division proceedings involve applications for construction of power plants and high-voltage transmission lines; rates and other matters for gas, electric, and telephone companies; purchased gas fuel rate adjustments; matters relating to bus, passenger common carrier, water, and sewage disposal companies; plant equipment and depreciation; and consumer complaints not resolved at the administrative level. During

2013, PSC delegated 286 cases to the division, of which 257 related to transportation matters.

In 2011, PSC began referring to an individual with the statutory job title of “hearing examiner” as a “public utility law judge.” PSC advises that the division currently has one chief hearing examiner and three additional hearing examiners.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: SB 173 of 2005, a similar bill, received an unfavorable report from the Senate Finance Committee. HB 283 of 1998, a similar bill, received an unfavorable report from the House Environmental Matters Committee.

Cross File: HB 35 (Delegate Barkley) - Economic Matters.

Information Source(s): Public Service Commission, Office of People’s Counsel, Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - January 14, 2015
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