

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2005 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

Senate Bill 173 (Chairman, Finance Committee)
(By Request – Departmental – Public Service Commission)

Finance

Public Service Commission - Public Utility Law Judges

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

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. The change would not materially affect governmental finances.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: PSC has determined that this bill has minimal or no impact on small business (attached). Legislative Services concurs with this assessment.

Analysis

Background: PSC’s Hearing Examiner Division has six attorney hearing examiners, including the Chief Hearing Examiner. PSC delegates to the Hearing Examiner Division proceedings pertaining to the following:

- applications for construction of power plants and high-voltage transmission lines;
- rates and other matters for gas, electric, and telephone companies;
- purchased gas and electric fuel rate adjustments;
- bus, trucking, water, and sewage disposal companies;
- plant and equipment depreciation; and

- consumer complaints that are not resolved at the administrative level.

Also, PSC has a part-time Taxicab Hearing Officer, who hears matters pertaining to taxicab permit holders and taxicab drivers' licenses.

The Hearing Examiner Division constitutes a separate organizational unit reporting directly to the commission. Hearing examiners conduct formal proceedings in matters referred to the division and file proposed orders, including findings of fact and conclusions of law, with the commission.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: Similar legislation, HB 283 of 1998 (Departmental), received an unfavorable report from the Environmental Matters Committee.

Cross File: None.

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

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - January 27, 2005
ncs/jr

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