



CONSUMER SPOTLIGHT

Public Utility News You Can Use

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Executive Director's Message

By Dean Nishina

Spring time has arrived and the Consumer Advocate's office continues to monitor utility related bills that are making their way through this legislative session. Two in particular we are tracking are companion bills SB991 and HB272 that essentially loosens public telecommunications utilities from the regulatory jurisdiction of the Public Utilities Commission (PUC).

In this edition, we cover the Young Brothers rate increase approval (page 2) and the Hawaiian Electric Companies power purchase agreement applications (page 3). Also, note the public hearing dates for the Hawaii Electric Light Company (HELCO) rate case (page 4).

Our office continues to work hard in other various PUC dockets such as the ongoing HELCO rate case (Docket No. 2018-0368) and the Performance Based Regulation proceedings (Docket No. 2018-0088). Subscribe to our newsletter to keep updated on applications like these.



Fix a Leak Week

Held annually in mid March, Fix a Leak Week encourages you to check for leaks around your home, helping to prevent nearly 1 trillion gallons of water wasted nationwide from leaks.



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The National Consumer Protection Week fair was hosted by the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs and held at the King Kalakaua building on March 6.

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LIHEAP Energy Credit Program Opens in June

The Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) provides heating and/or cooling assistance to needy Hawaii households by assisting in one-time payments towards their gas or electric utility bill.

One way is through the Energy Credit program in which low income households who are not in crisis but need assistance with their heating and cooling of their residence with bill payment. The application period normally runs during the month of June.

All benefits are paid as a one-time only credit paid directly to the electric or gas utility company of your choice.

The state does not accept applications. Those interested can apply for LIHEAP at your local Community Action Program on your island. Visit humanservices.hawaii.gov/bessd/liheap/ for more information about the program and contact details.



LIHEAP is a federally funded program providing assistance with energy costs.



Young Brothers containers sit on a dock in Honolulu.

Young Brothers Receives Rate Increase Approval from PUC

The Public Utilities Commission (PUC) approved an increase in Young Brother's (YB) intrastate freight revenues of \$3,401,150 or approximately 4.32 percent over intrastate revenues at present rates, which results in a total allowed intrastate freight revenue requirement of \$74,432,141 for the 2018 test year.

YB's application filed in March 2018, requested approval of an 11.05 percent rate increase, or an increase in revenue of \$7,842,000, based on a proposed intrastate revenue requirement of \$78,830,233 and a rate of return of 11.09 percent.

In the application proceedings, the Consumer Advocate's (CA) direct testimonies proposed an increase of \$913,403 for YB's intrastate revenue requirement, based on a rate of return on 7.92 percent.

Public meetings were held on each of the islands served by YB in July 2018 in which the CA's office attended all meetings to hear customer oral testimonies. Other than testimonies from individuals who were YB employees that supported the proposed rate increase, many other comments were in opposition to the proposed increase.

Docket No. 2017-0363

PUC Docket Numbers are included in these articles for further, in depth reading. PUC public filings are accessible online via the PUC's Document Management System (DMS). Visit: <http://dms.puc.hawaii.gov/dms>



Hawaiian Electric Companies submitted seven solar project applications to the PUC.

Consumer Advocate Files SOP for Six Proposed Solar Projects

Late last year, the Hawaiian Electric Companies (HECO) filed seven power purchase agreement (PPA) applications with the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) for solar projects on Oahu, Maui, and Hawaii Island.

In its Statements of Position (SOP) in separate filings, the Consumer Advocate (CA) recommended approval for five of them while disapproving one (the Hoohana Solar 1, LLC project on Oahu). The seventh application (Paeahu Solar, LLC in Maui) is awaiting a PUC decision to approve intervenors before the CA can make a recommendation following its research and analysis.

The CA, in Docket No. 2018-0431 opposing HECO's PPA with Hoohana Solar, notes that while the PPA could provide benefits to the system and to customers, "in order to avoid uncertainty regarding whether the project will be able to move forward if conditional approval was granted," citing "there appears to be a potential 'fatal' flaw that could jeopardize the ability for the project to move forward."

The other five applications the CA recommended for approval include Waikoloa Solar, LLC (Hawaii Island), Kuawehi Solar, LLC (Hawaii Island), Mililani I Solar, LLC (Oahu), Waiawa Solar Power, LLC (Oahu), and Kuihelani Solar, LLC (Maui).

Docket Nos. 2018-0430, 2018-0431, 2018-0432, 2018-0434, 2018-0435, 2018-0436

Reducing Water Heating Costs

Water heating is usually the second largest energy expense in your home. It typically accounts for about 13 percent of your energy usage.

There are four primary ways to cut your water heating bills: use less hot water; turn down the thermostat on your water heater; insulate your water heater and pipes; or buy a new, more efficient model.

- If your hot water tank is warm to the touch, consider insulating it to save 7 to 16 percent annually in water heating costs.
- Set your water heater temperature lower, such as to 120 degrees Fahrenheit, a temperature considered safe for most of the population.
- Repair leaky faucets promptly. A leaky faucet wastes gallons of water in a short period of time.



Source: U.S. Department of Energy, Energy.gov/energysaver

Governor Appoints Leo Asuncion to Public Utilities Commission



Gov. David Ige has appointed Leo R. Asuncion, Jr. to the Public Utilities Commission. Asuncion currently serves as planning program administrator for the state's Office of Planning, overseeing the overall management, administration and operations of the Planning Division. He also served as director and interim director of the Office of Planning from 2015 – 2018.

Asuncion replaces Randy Iwase, who retired at the end of last year. Other commissioners include Jennifer Potter and James Griffin, who was appointed PUC chair in January. Asuncion's appointment is subject to Senate confirmation.

Upcoming Dates of Interest

- **March 26: Prince Kuhio Day** (State holiday, our office will be closed).
- **March 27-28: Hawaii Energy Conference** (formerly known as Maui Energy Conference) at the Maui Arts & Cultural Center. See hawaiienergyconference.com for details.
- **April 5: Financial Literacy Fair** DCA will have a table at the fair held at Tamarind Park at Bishop Square from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
- **April 11: PUC public hearing (Kona)** for the HELCO rate case at 5 p.m. at West Hawaii Civic Center. Details on the DCA website.
- **April 12: PUC public hearing (Hilo)** for the HELCO rate case at 5 p.m. at Aupuni Center. Details on the DCA website.
- **April 19: Good Friday** (State holiday, our office will be closed).
- **May 27: Memorial Day** (State holiday, our office will be closed).



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