

# Public Utilities Commission SMART Act Hearing

Joint Energy Committee  
January 16, 2025



**COLORADO**

**Public Utilities Commission**

Department of  
Regulatory Agencies


# DORA Organizational Chart




**DEPARTMENT OF REGULATORY AGENCIES**  
**Patty Salazar, Executive Director**

|  |   |  |  |                                   |
|--|---|--|--|-----------------------------------|
| <b>Deputy Executive Director, Ginny Brown</b>            |   |  <b>EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S OFFICE</b><br>(35.7 FTE) | <b>Chief Administrative Officer, Marisol Larez</b> |                                   |
| Communications & Stakeholder Engagement                  | Legislative Affairs<br>Energy Modernization |  | Human Resources Office                             | Budget Office                     |
| Colorado Office of Policy, Research, & Regulatory Reform |   |  | Department Operations                              | Office of Accounting & Purchasing |

 **DIVISION OF BANKING**  
 Ken Boldt, Commissioner  
 (44.6 FTE)

 **COLORADO CIVIL RIGHTS DIVISION**  
 Aubrey Sullivan, Director  
 (41.8 FTE)

 **DIVISION OF CONSERVATION**  
 Aaron Welch, Director  
 (6.0 FTE)

 **DIVISION OF FINANCIAL SERVICES**  
 Mark Valente, Commissioner  
 (15.6 FTE)

 **DIVISION OF INSURANCE**  
 Michael Conway, Commissioner  
 (120.3 FTE)

 **OFFICE OF THE UTILITY CONSUMER ADVOCATE**  
 Cindy Schonhaut, Director  
 (14.0 FTE)

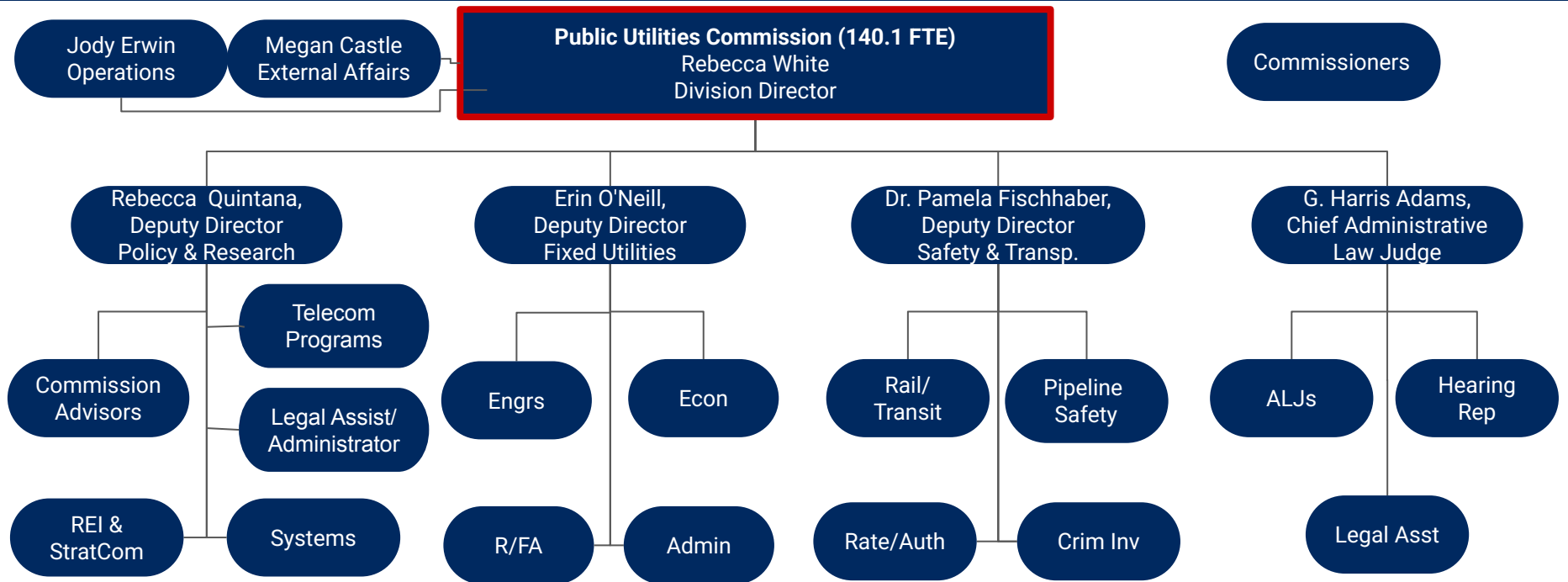
 **DIVISION OF PROFESSIONS & OCCUPATIONS**  
 Samuel Delp, Director  
 (235.5 FTE)

 **PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION**  
 Rebecca White, Director  
 (140.1 FTE)

 **DIVISION OF REAL ESTATE**  
 Marcia Waters, Director  
 (48.9 FTE)

 **DIVISION OF SECURITIES**  
 Tung Chan, Commissioner  
 (24.0 FTE)

# PUC Organizational Chart



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# PUC Commissioners



**Eric Blank, Chair**



**Megan Gilman, Comm**



**Tom Plant, Comm**



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# Public Utilities Commission Mission

**Serve the public interest by effectively regulating utilities and facilities so that the people of Colorado receive safe, reliable, and reasonably-priced services consistent with the economic, environmental and social values of our state.**



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# PUC FY 2025-26 Budget Request

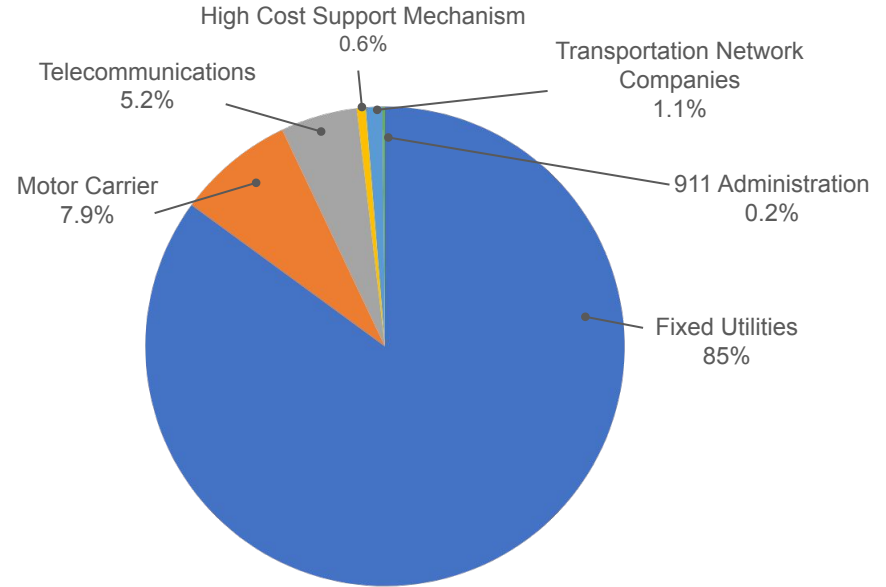
## FY 2025-26 Budget Snapshot

FY 2025-26 Total Funds: \$20.1M

FY 2025-26 General Fund: \$0M

FY 2025-26 FTE: 138.5

Percent of Revenue by Major Funding Source\*



*\*Percentages above use FY 24-25 data and are provided in order to informationally highlight the relative size of PUC programs and major fund sources*



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# PUC Select FY 2025-26 Budget Requests

The Division does not have any FY 2025-26 Budget Change Requests or utilize fiscal stimulus funds.

Continuation funding for the Division is included the Department's FY 2025-26 Budget Submission.



# Legislative Agenda

The Division does not have any FY 2025-26 legislative proposals.



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# Focus Areas

- Energy Affordability - Implementation of SB291
- Improving access to energy assistance for low-income Coloradans
- Consumer Protection
- EDI: Equity and Environmental Justice
- Pipeline and Heavy Rail Safety



# SB23-291 Energy Affordability

To date, the PUC has implemented nearly all of the provisions of SB291, including establishing:

- A “rainy day fund” to cover consumer costs when natural gas prices reach a certain level
- Requirements for annual utility reporting of costs prohibited from inclusion in utility rates (e.g., lobbying expenses, political contributions) and 10 year rate trend data with new rate change requests
- New mechanisms to incentivize gas utilities to minimize fuel costs
- Investigations into barriers to beneficial electrification and cost causation factors on the gas utility system

# Energy Affordability for Low Income Coloradans

For many low income Coloradans, energy affordability is a very real, day-to-day reality.

- The PUC is focused on two related objectives to help ensure eligible Coloradans get the help they need:

1-Creating a simple, single source of information on bill assistance programs, eligibility requirements and applications steps.

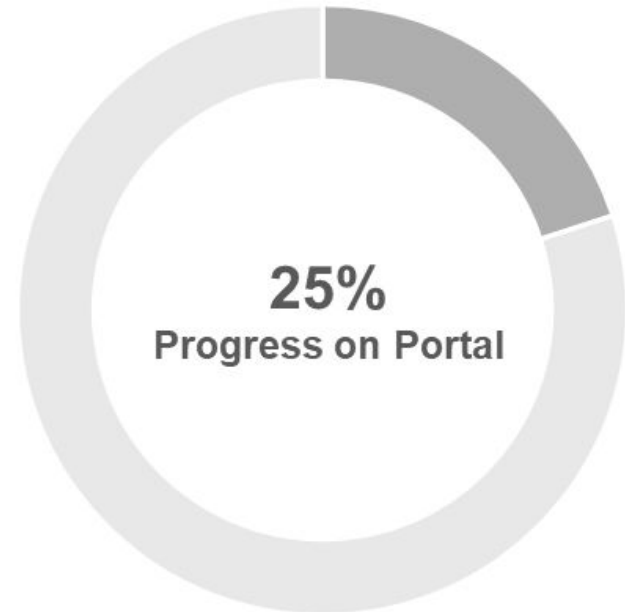
2-Increasing enrollment in utility-run bill assistance programs.

# PUC's FY 2024-25 Wildly Important Goal (WIG)

## Establish a new, single portal for energy assistance programs.

In an effort to facilitate and improve access to energy assistance programs, the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) will establish a navigational resource for all energy assistance programs in the state of Colorado by June 30, 2026.

- In less than 10 minutes, provide customers with information and education about bill assistance and efficiency rebates they are likely eligible for based on income, geography, utility, situation, needs, etc.
- Partnership between the State (Colorado Digital Service), Google Cloud's Public Sector Rapid Innovation Team, Rewiring America and Gary Community Ventures



# More Information

To view monthly updates on Wildly Important Goals and corresponding lead measures, please visit the [Governor's Dashboard](#).

For more information on additional PUC goals, view our FY 2023-24 Performance Plan at: [operations.colorado.gov/performance-management/department-performance-plans](https://operations.colorado.gov/performance-management/department-performance-plans)



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# Utility Bill Help Pilot Program

The Utility Bill Help (UBH) program for the 2024/25 heating season refers income-qualified Colorado residents to assistance programs that help pay utility bills.

Eligible customers can limit home natural gas and electric bills to a small percentage of their annual income.

## Customers Who Are Eligible

Customers who can apply for the program must meet both of the following requirements:

- Customer of Atmos Energy, Black Hills Energy, Colorado Natural Gas, or Xcel Energy
- Customer currently receiving state or government benefits including SNAP, AND, Medicaid, CHP+, WIC, TANF, or SSI.

# Utility Bill Help Pilot Program

## 2023/24 Heating Season Results

- Processed 763 applications and referred 653 applicants to assistance programs.
- 51% of referred applicants were enrolled in assistance programs.
- 197 applicants received forgiveness credits for past due balances ranging from \$2 to \$5,500.

## 2024/25 Heating Season Changes

**Goal:** Increase applications and enrollment in assistance programs to make bills more affordable for income-qualified customers.

**Changes:** Removed applicant requirement to apply for LEAP before Utility Bill Help.

Progress as of January 1, 2025:

- Processed 539 new applications and referred 513 applicants to assistance programs.
- Submitted 68 applicants for re-enrollment from 2023/24 heating season to Atmos and Black Hills.
- All Xcel customers accepted in 2023/24 heating season remained in programs for 2024/25.

# Consumer Protection

A core function of the PUC is to resolve complaints from consumers across the industries we regulate. This involves determining whether regulations have been violated and what recourse consumers are entitled to.

In 2024 the PUC:

- Received 2,952 complaints
- Secured \$176k in refunds to consumers
  - \$166,205 in refunds related to utility bills
  - \$10,657 in refunds for transportation-related complaints (e.g. towing)



# Pipeline Safety

The PUC is responsible for inspecting and monitoring the safety of intrastate distribution, gathering, and transmission natural gas pipelines.

A 2023 audit resulted in 39 recommendations across 12 categories. As of October of this year, the PUC had fully implemented 36 recommendations and partially implemented 3 recommendations. We have since completed work on 2 of these outstanding recommendations and are making good progress on the final area. The audit brought about a number of key improvements:

- Complete overhaul of our internal program guidelines
- Development of a new data management system to track and document all inspections and investigations, compliance actions and complaints from stakeholders
- Inspector training: 8 of 10 inspectors are certified as lead inspectors meaning they have completed at least 330 hours of training per inspector

# Rail Safety

HB24-1030 made significant changes to Colorado's regulatory framework for heavy rail safety including:

- establishing a new state rail inspection program
- new rules/requirements on emergency response training, drills and table-top exercises, blocked crossing and incident reporting, fining, confidentiality, and rail safety advisory committee reporting

In December of 2024 the PUC submitted a comprehensive report to the legislature on rail safety as required by HB1030.

# Equity and Environmental Justice

**SB 21-272** requires the Commission to promulgate rules in which it “consider[s] how best to provide equity, minimize impacts, and prioritize benefits to disproportionately impacted communities and address historical inequalities.”

## Key Ongoing Activities:

- Issued agency Equity Framework and are implementing across teams
- Completed Staff Capstone Report summarizing results of stakeholder engagement in preparation for upcoming rulemaking
- Implementing communications and outreach improvements, with the guidance of a 15-member Equity Advisory Focus Group

## 2022-2024 Achievements

15

### Workshops

and other stakeholder activities on topics like case tiering and defining impacts and benefits

213

### Unique Attendees

from nonprofits, regulated industries, state and local gov't, and DI communities

390

### Email Contacts

receive updates on the Commission's SB 21-272 and related work

Visit: [puc.colorado.gov/equity](https://puc.colorado.gov/equity)

# 2025 Regulatory-Rulemaking Agenda

- Electric and Gas - Best Value Employment Metrics and Energy Sector Public Works - SB 23-292
- Practice and Procedure, Electric and Gas - Equity Considerations - SB 21-272
- Electric - Distribution System Planning - SB 24-218
- Transportation - Large Market Taxi Rates and Passenger Carrier Rules
- Rail - Incident Response, Wayside Detection, Training - HB 24-1030
- Gas Pipeline Safety - Advance Leak Detection - SB 21-108

# Questions?



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