

# Public Utilities Commission SMART Act Hearing

Joint Energy Committee  
January 17, 2024



**COLORADO**

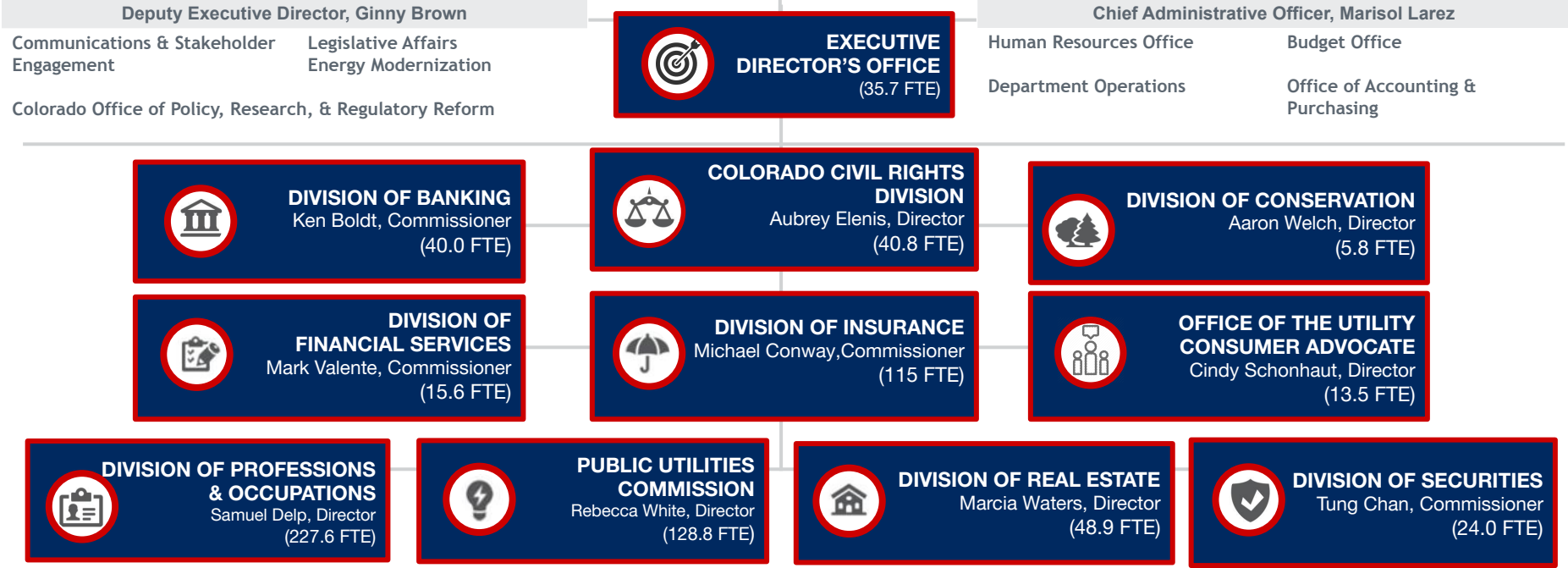
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Regulatory Agencies

Public Utilities Commission

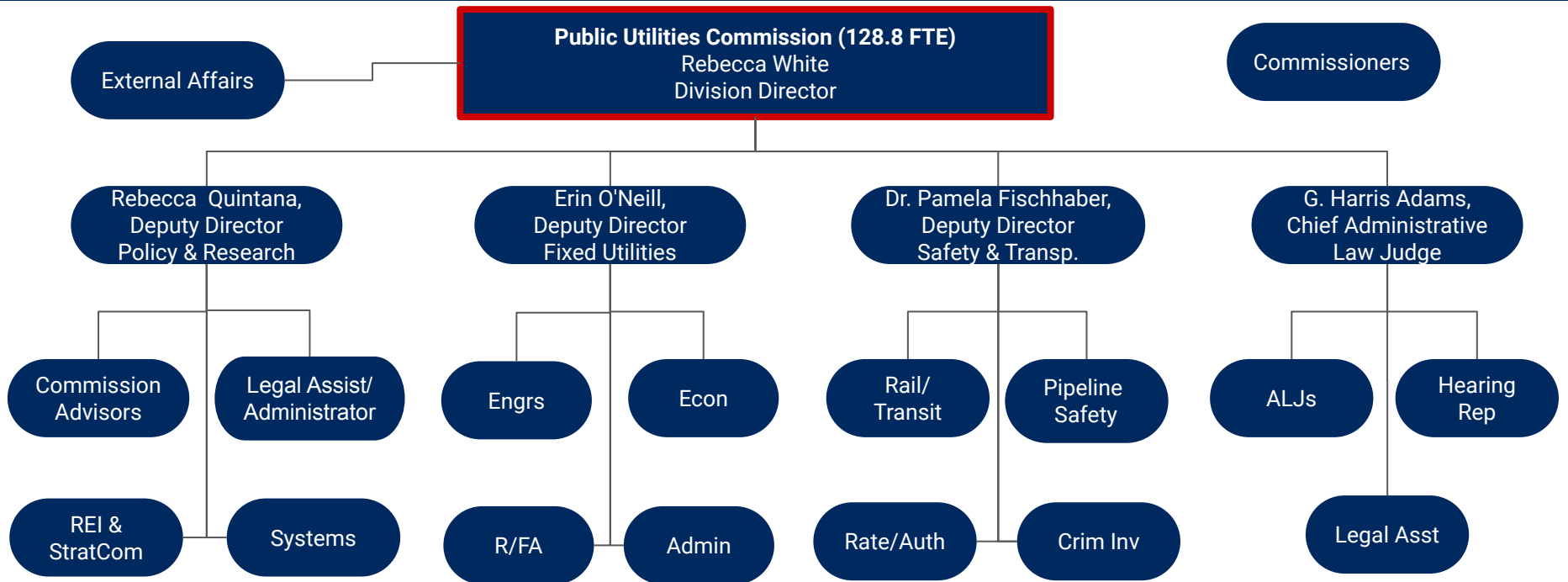
# DORA Organizational Chart



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



# PUC Organizational Chart



# PUC Commissioners



**Eric Blank, Chair**



**Megan Gilman, Comm**



**Tom Plant, Comm**



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Public Utilities Commission

# 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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# Focus Areas

- Energy Affordability
- Gas Pipeline Safety
- Towing
- Successful implementation of transformative energy legislation
- Equity



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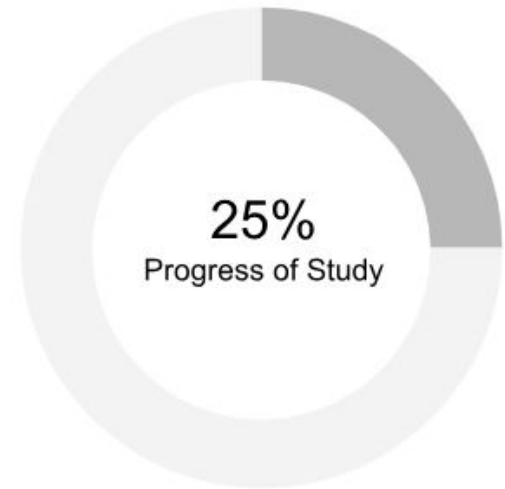
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# PUC's FY 2023-24 Wildly Important Goal (WIG)

## Complete an Evaluation to Sustainably Reduce Electric and Gas Rates

Complete an evaluation of how existing structures, systems, processes, and procedures can ensure reliability and save Coloradans money by sustainably reducing electricity rates from 11% below the national average to 21% and natural gas rates from 26% below the national average to 36% by June 30, 2024, with continued implementation monitoring and review of corresponding strategies through June 30, 2026. Concentric Consulting is developing a 30-year working model for the PUC that provides an understanding of the impacts of future utility decisions on Colorado electric rates that will be complete by June 2024.



# Utility Bill Help Pilot Program

For the 2023-2024 heating season, the DORA/PUC team is standing up the **Utility Bill Help pilot** program.

The Governor's February 2023 letter directing agencies to work together to find ways to reduce energy bills revealed a critical gap in existing bill support programs for low income Coloradans.

- The only way to receive bill assistance from utilities is to first be registered for federal LEAP assistance.
- Many Coloradans are denied LEAP benefits for reasons other than income which meant they were then unable to access utility bill help.



Have you already applied for LEAP this year and been denied? You might still qualify for the Utility Bill Help Program. [Learn more.](#)

## How it Works

For the 2023/34 heating season, the Utility Bill Help program will directly refer qualified Coloradans denied for LEAP into utility-run energy affordability programs which limits total utility bills to a small percentage of total income.



# Other Affordability Efforts

In addition to the Utility Bill Help Program, the PUC is working to implement the provisions of SB23-291 and address bill affordability generally, including:

- Utility Gas Cost Volatility Mitigation Plans
- Eliminating natural gas extension allowances
- Collecting and analyzing information on disconnections to understand trends and equity issues
- Independent evaluation of utility bill assistance programs to find areas of improvement
- Commissioner Information Meetings on income-qualified energy and bill assistance programs
- Web posting of utility rate trend reports
- Developing gas price risk sharing mechanisms for gas and electric utilities

# Gas Pipeline Safety: Audit Implementation & Robust Enforcement

The PUC is responsible for enforcing state and federal safety regulations on intrastate gas pipelines used for transport.

A June 2023 audit found many areas for improvement in the consistency and completeness of the PUC's enforcement process and documentation.

- The audit made 39 recommendations in all
- 2 recommendations had a deadline of December 2023
  - **To date, the PUC has completed 19 recommendations and is on track to fully implement all audit recommendations**

The team remains focused on implementing the audit recommendations and ensuring a robust enforcement program. Further, the PUC will be initiating a new rule addressing advanced leak detection in 2024.

# Towing: Advancing Regulation and Outreach

- Recent legislation (e.g. HB 22-1314) brought about considerable changes to towing regulation, including a 24-hr notice standard, limitations on certain fees, and easier and lower cost vehicle release criteria.
- As a result of these changes and greater scrutiny and attention on this industry overall, the PUC has seen a tremendous increase in the number of complaints.
- Between November 2022 - November 2023, the PUC's consumer affairs and investigation teams secured:
  - 282 refunds for consumers, totaling \$147,364
  - \$202,170 in industry fines
  - 268 Violation Warning letters, citing various towing -related violations



**2024 Focus:** Ensuring consumers know their rights and industry understands their responsibilities and all regulatory requirements.

# Implementing Transformative Energy Legislation

- Clean Energy Plan/Energy Resource Plans
- Gas Infrastructure Plans
- Clean Heat Plans
- Transportation Electrification Plans
- Clean Hydrogen

# 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:

- Development of agency Equity Framework
- Pre-Rulemaking Proceeding
- Implementing communications and outreach improvements
- Established an Equity Advisory Focus Group bringing together a **diverse and representative body of 15 members to contribute to the Agency’s public participation and communication efforts.**

## 2023 Achievements

7

### Workshops

on topics like case tiering and defining impacts and benefits

150

### Unique Attendees

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

350

### Email Contacts

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

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

# PUC FY 2023-24 Budget

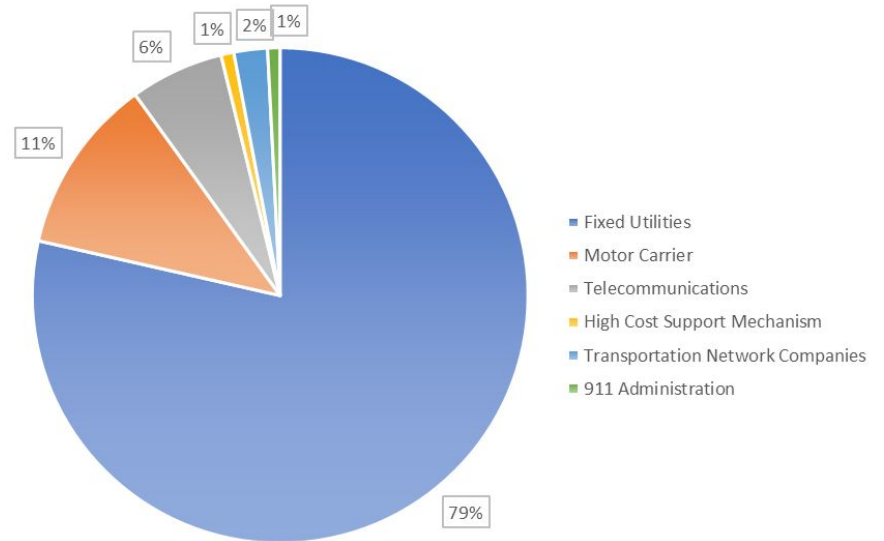
## FY 2023-24 Budget Snapshot

FY 2023-24 Total Funds: \$21.8M

FY 2023-24 General Fund: \$0M

FY 2023-24 FTE: 128.8

PUC FY22/23 Revenues (projected, including revenue funding UCA, and excluding grant and transfer items)



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# Legislation

The Department respectfully requests the General Assembly consider legislation on the following:

- Directing the Commission to hold a rulemaking to establish voluntary minimum training and operational standards for 9-1-1 call centers.
- The PUC is also working with CEO and other stakeholders on ideas to strategically reduce investments in natural gas infrastructure and continue to address affordability for Colorado ratepayers.

# 2024 Regulatory-Rulemaking Agenda

- All Industries - Equity in regulatory work for DI communities
- Transportation
- Telecommunications
- Energy



# 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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# Questions?



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