

FILE



Forging a partnership between farmers and consumers
• Working together for Ohio's farmers •

Original

December 8, 2003

Public Utilities Commission of Ohio
180 East Broad Street
Columbus, OH 43215

RECEIVED-DOCKETING DIV
2003 DEC -8 AM 11:57
PUCO

RE: Public Comment - Fourth Amendment to Joint Stipulation and Recommendation in Case Number 94-987-GA-AIR; Second Amendment to Joint Stipulation and Recommendation in Case Number 96-1113-GA-ATA and Stipulation and Recommendation in Case Number 03-1459-GA-ATA

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Commission:

Since 1994, the Ohio Farm Bureau Federation (OFBF) through its Legal Counsel, Brian Chorpenning has represented farm, small business and residential consumers as a member of the Collaborate working group helping create the Columbia Customer Choice Program. I have been involved with the OFBF since 1985, and after my appointment to Director of Energy Services in early 1997, I joined Mr. Chorpenning as an OFBF representative to the Collaborative.

Next to labor, energy is agriculture's largest single operational cost. Farm Bureau members with homes and small business operations in urban, suburban and rural settings have used the organization's policy development process to voice their concerns. They want to continue to capitalize on any and all savings opportunities Customer Choice programs can give them.

OFBF represents farm, small business and residential consumers in a variety of energy-related working groups. Some groups are working to further develop customer choice programs in other Ohio utilities. Others are helping energy users apply new technology. Still, others are working to create/enhance government policies and regulations to find new, innovative, efficient and effective ways to empower communities and individuals to get things done. As a result, Farm Bureau is working with representatives of state, county and city governments, members of the PUCO, Ohio Consumers Counsel, the Ohio Department of Development, Ohio-based public utilities, consumer groups, engineers, academia and interested citizens to establish programs that help consumers control their energy costs.

Based on my experience, Columbia Gas of Ohio's Collaborative is one of the best examples where a variety of groups involved with energy are working together to find solutions. I am personally involved with other Collaborative members - representatives from the utility, consumers, energy suppliers, local governments, schools and state agencies, including members of the PUCO staff, to enhance and/or adjust the program.

This is to certify that the image appearing on an accurate and complete reproduction of a case file document delivered in the regular course of business.
Technician AN Date Processed 12/8/03

The Amendments, Joint Stipulations and Recommendations as detailed above and now before the Commission are the result of face-to-face discussion. Collaborative members are working to find ways to address changing energy market conditions and utility operation factors. Farm Bureau feels this filing is not an end unto itself, but the latest in a series of vital adjustments that ensure that Customer Choice continues to address consumer needs.

Our signature to the current Stipulation signifies our support for this process. Farm Bureau understands that further adjustments to this program will be made to address changing needs and demands. This process ensures that farm, small business and residential energy users will continue to benefit from the Columbia Gas of Ohio Customer Choice program.

Similarly, Farm Bureau continues to support the face-to-face dialogue that facilitates sharing ideas/concerns and creates viable solutions the Columbia Collaborative process generates. We urge that the Commission staff continues to use the benefits the Collaborative affords and continues to be an active member of the Collaborative.

With these factors in mind, the Ohio Farm Bureau urges Commission approval of this application.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dale Arnold", followed by a horizontal line.

Dale Arnold
Director, Energy Services, OFBF