

BEFORE

THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF OHIO

In the Matter of the Complaint of  
Rachel E. Ballard,

Complainant,

v.

Columbia Gas of Ohio, Inc.,

Respondent.

Case No. 08-269-GA-CSS

ENTRY

The Attorney Examiner finds:

- (1) On March 17, 2008, Rachael E. Ballard (complainant) filed a complaint with the Commission against Columbia Gas of Ohio, Inc. (Columbia). Ms. Ballard states, among other things, that she received a letter from Columbia dated January 30, 2008, which informed Ms. Ballard that, based on a meter reading taken January 25, 2008, Columbia had inadvertently billed her account based on her neighbor's meter readings. Further, the complaint contends that, as a result of the incorrect meter readings used to bill the complainant's account, Ms. Ballard's account was billed \$888.90 for gas consumed over the previous year. Ms. Ballard argues that Columbia has rendered inaccurate bills since she commenced service with the company in 2005 and, therefore, provided inadequate service and unlawfully and unreasonably discriminated against her based on the inaccurate bills. Ms. Ballard requests that the accuracy of the bill developed for service January 26, 2007, through January 25, 2008, be verified and, if it is determined that she owes Columbia, that she be allowed to pay the back-billed amount over 24 months.
- (2) On April 7, 2008, Columbia filed its answer to the complaint. Columbia admits that Ms. Ballard's account was incorrectly billed based on the gas usage from her neighbor's meter readings, as stated in a letter from Columbia to the complainant dated January 30, 2008, and that it is necessary to bill Ms. Ballard for additional gas consumption. Columbia states that

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the bill issued to Ms. Ballard dated February 13, 2008 for \$475.48, included the correct amount due for one month of usage and also included an extended payment plan amount for the prior 12 months usage not previously billed to Ms. Ballard. Further, Columbia denies that the company has rendered inadequate service or unlawfully or unreasonably discriminated against Ms. Ballard. Finally, Columbia states that in regard to the complainant's account, the company has complied with all applicable Ohio statutes, rules and regulations and the company tariff.


- (3) In accordance with the Commission's goal of reducing the number of adversarial proceedings before it, the Attorney Examiner finds that this matter should be scheduled for a conference. The purpose of the conference will be to explore the parties' willingness to negotiate a resolution of this complaint in lieu of an evidentiary hearing. In accordance with Rule 408 of the Ohio Rules of Evidence, any statements made in an attempt to settle this matter without the need for an evidentiary hearing will not generally be admissible in future proceedings in this case or be admissible to prove liability or invalidity of a claim. Nothing prohibits any party from initiating settlement negotiations prior to the scheduled settlement conference. An Attorney Examiner from the Commission's Legal Department, Richard Bulgrin, will facilitate the settlement discussion.
- (4) Accordingly, the conference shall be scheduled for Monday, May 12, 2008, at 10:00 a.m., at the offices of the Commission, 180 East Broad Street, Conference Room 11-B, Columbus, Ohio 43215-3793. The parties should bring all relevant documents with them to the conference and, if the parties are unable to resolve the dispute at the settlement conference, they should be prepared to address procedural issues and schedule the hearing.

It is, therefore,

ORDERED, That this matter be scheduled for a conference on May 12, 2008, at 10:00 a.m., at the offices of the Commission, 180 East Broad Street, 11<sup>th</sup> floor, Conference Room 11-B, Columbus, Ohio. It is, further,

ORDERED, That a copy of this entry be served upon Rachael Ballard, Columbia and its counsel, and all other interested persons of record.

THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF OHIO



By: Greta See  
Attorney Examiner

grg  
/vrm

Entered in the Journal

**APR 23 2008**



Renee J. Jenkins  
Secretary