



OFFICE OF THE CONSUMER ADVOCATE

21 S. Fruit St., Suite 18
Concord, N.H. 03301-2429Website:
www.oca.nh.gov**Office of the Consumer Advocate FY 26/27 Budget – Senate Finance Committee Budget Hearing**

Pursuant to RSA 363:28, the Office of the Consumer Advocate (“OCA”) represents the interests of residential utility customers before the Public Utilities Commission (“PUC”) and elsewhere. As our name suggests, we are an advocacy organization – i.e., we appear as a party before the PUC and, if necessary, before courts as well as other regulatory bodies where the interests of the state’s residential utility customers are at issue.

In other words, our main job is to help the PUC make the best possible decisions. As specified by RSA 363:17-a, the PUC serves as the arbiter between the interests of utility shareholders and utility customers. Utility shareholders are well-represented by those companies’ lawyers and experts; the OCA adds weight to the other side of the scale by participating in all aspects of PUC proceedings. In other words, we file pleadings, we conduct discovery, we present expert testimony, and we appear at PUC hearings.

Both at the state and federal levels, the electric industry has been restructured so as to rely as much as possible on competition and open markets. New England’s transmission grid, as well as its market for wholesale electricity, are operated by the nonprofit regional transmission organization ISO New England. It is at ISO New England, and its stakeholder advisory body known as NEPOOL, where many of the most consequential decisions affecting New Hampshire’s electricity are increasingly made.

Therefore, the OCA is a voting member of NEPOOL. As such, our involvement in regional electric matters complements the executive branch’s engagement with ISO New England, which occurs via the New England States Committee on Electricity (“NESCOE”). We strive to align our NEPOOL positions with those taken by the Commissioner of the Department of Energy in his capacity as New Hampshire’s NESCOE representative.

During the last budget cycle, the General Court authorized us to add a sixth position to our small agency – Director of Federal and Regional Affairs – which, when filled a year ago by an experienced attorney, has allowed us for the first time to maintain a significant and ongoing presence at NEPOOL, ISO New England, and in selected proceedings before the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. For the 2026/27 biennium, we are not requesting any further changes to our staffing levels. Thus, assuming approval of our proposed budget, we expect to remain an office of three lawyers, two expert analysts, and a legal assistant.

**Office of the Consumer Advocate FY26/27 Budget Highlights – Senate Finance Committee
Budget Hearing**

Budget Comparison Highlights:

	FY24 Act	FY25 Adj Auth	FY26 Gov Rec	FY27 Gov Rec
Current Permanent Positions	\$365,952	\$515,579	\$524,450	\$537,327
Other Personnel Costs	\$0	\$56,000	\$0	\$0
Benefits	\$192,182	\$197,241	\$292,768	\$308,912
Operating Expenses	\$17,457	\$92,826	\$46,300	\$47,500
Grants and Grant Admin	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Contracted Expenditures	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Other Expenses	\$245,918	\$259,469	\$249,619	\$247,658
Transfers	\$35,733	\$37,676	\$44,980	\$45,741
Total Appropriation	\$857,242	\$1,158,791	\$1,158,117	\$1,187,138

Funding Comparison:

	FY24 Act	FY25 Adj Auth	FY26 Gov Rec	FY27 Gov Rec
Other (Utility Assessment)	\$857,242	\$1,158,791	\$1,158,117	\$1,187,138
Total Funding	\$857,242	\$1,158,791	\$1,158,117	\$1,187,138

Position Overview:

	FY24 Act	FY25 Adj Auth	FY26 Gov Rec	FY27 Gov Rec
Permanent Classified	5	5	5	5
Unclassified Positions	1	1	1	1
Total Positions	6	6	6	6

Current Full Time Permanent Vacancies: 1 vacancy, 5 filled positions 16.7% Vacancy Rate