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PRESS RELEASE

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PEOPLE'S COUNSEL SECURES PARTIAL SETTLEMENT WITH WASHINGTON GAS TO ADDRESS DEFECTIVE NOTICES OF TERMINATION

(February 15, 2018) --- People's Counsel Paula M. Carmody announced today that the Office of People's Counsel ("OPC") has reached a partial settlement with Washington Gas Light Company ("Washington Gas"). OPC had filed a Petition with the Public Service Commission ("Commission") requesting an investigation of missing and defective notices sent to Washington Gas' residential customers. The mandatory notices are intended to provide important consumer protection information to residential utility consumers.

Refund of Reconnection Fees and Other Relief. During the period December 2013 through January 2017, Washington Gas sent its residential customers incomplete notices of termination and terminated service to over 47,000 of these customers. The notices were missing essential information about energy assistance and dispute procedures that may have helped these customers avoid the service terminations. Under the Partial Settlement, Washington Gas will refund \$1,471,311 to those residential customers who received an incomplete termination notice and who paid reconnection fees. Washington Gas also agreed to a number of additional relief provisions for both former and current customers who received incomplete termination notices. Specifically, Washington Gas agreed to waive all uncollected late and reconnection fees billed to these customers, and waive all deposit requirements, reconnection charges and service initiation charges that may be associated with initiating service for a customer whose service was terminated and not reconnected.

Energy Assistance Funds. Washington Gas has agreed to provide \$400,000 to the Washington Area Fuel Fund (“WAFF”) for the benefit of payment-troubled customers of Washington Gas. WAFF provides services to eligible payment-troubled customers in Prince George’s, Montgomery, St. Mary’s, Calvert, Charles and Frederick Counties.

Compliance Plan. Washington Gas has agreed to institute a robust compliance plan, including annual reviews of its written customer communications, to ensure compliance with Maryland rules and regulations. Washington Gas has also agreed to submit detailed reports to OPC if any missing or incomplete written customer communications are discovered.

Master-Meter Notices. The Partial Settlement Agreement resolves disputes between OPC and Washington Gas about the content required for termination notices to residents and occupants of master-metered condominiums. Specifically, OPC and Washington Gas have agreed to jointly petition the Commission requesting a clarification to the Commission’s regulations that govern the consumer protection notice requirements for master-metered buildings.

“Washington Gas’ incomplete service termination notices omitted the very basic types of information needed by customers to address bill payment disputes, seek assistance with past-due bills, and avoid service terminations,” said People’s Counsel Paula Carmody. “This failure denied necessary information to households to help them address past-due bills, submit disputes to the Commission, and avoid significant threats to the health and safety of customers and household occupants. Importantly, Washington Gas did not take steps to notify the Commission and OPC when it became aware of the defects in the termination notice, or to provide relief to customers. This Partial Settlement Agreement resolves OPC’s issues concerning those service termination notices. I believe the Partial Settlement will benefit the residential customers that we represent, hold Washington Gas accountable for its actions, and ensure future compliance with critical consumer notice protections.”

OPC and Washington Gas submitted the Partial Settlement Agreement to the Commission’s Chief Public Utility Law Judge today for consideration. The Partial Settlement must receive final approval from the Commission.

Copies of OPC’s filings in this matter and a complete copy of the settlement agreement may be viewed at www.psc.state.md.us in Case No. 9445.

The Maryland Office of the People’s Counsel is an independent state agency which represents residential consumers of regulated utility services including electric, gas, telecommunications, and water services, before the Maryland Public Service Commission, other state and federal agencies and the Courts.

xxxx End of OPC Press Release xxxx