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May 31, 2011

**RESOLUTION NO. 53120-11 RE: SUPPORT FOR THE OFFICE OF THE OHIO CONSUMERS' COUNSEL AND RECOMMENDING THE OHIO LEGISLATURE TO PRESERVE THE MISSION OF THE OCC BY RESTORING FUNDING TO THEIR BUDGET; AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY**

Motion by John Walker and seconded by Clark Sheets to make a resolution to restore the budget of the Office of Ohio Consumers' Counsel.

WHEREAS, in 1976, The Ohio Consumers' Counsel was created by the Ohio General Assembly to represent the interests of Ohio's residential utility customers in matters relating to their public utility services: electric, natural gas, water and telephone; and

WHEREAS, funded solely by assessments on utilities and not by taxes, The Ohio Consumers' Counsel's budget does not affect the State's Revenue Fund; and

WHEREAS, the Ohio Consumers' Counsel has a current operating budget of approximately \$8.5 million per year; however under the proposed biennial budget, the OCC's budget would be reduced to \$4.1 million per year; and

WHEREAS, the OCC staff, which includes attorneys, accountants, economists, engineers, investigators and other highly skilled professionals participate in legal proceedings, analyze utility issues, educate customers, resolve informal complaints relating to utility services through the effective Consumer Call Center, and advocates on behalf of Ohio's residential households; and

WHEREAS, in the current biennium, the Ohio Consumers' Counsel has saved customers \$54.8 million directly through its advocacy, and an additional \$1.9 billion in shared savings with other partners and furthermore, during the past 35 years the Ohio Consumers' Counsel has saved utility customers \$10 billion in avoided utility costs, thus the savings have far exceeded the costs; and

WHEREAS, any budget reduction to the OCC would not go back to the taxpayers, but would go to the utility companies, and the proposed budget cuts would have a detrimental impact on the residential utility customers of the State of Ohio and the ability of the Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel to effectively advocate on their behalf; THEREFORE,

- 1) The Hocking County Commissioners recognizes the vital work of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel as a strong advocate and only statutory entity representing the interests of residential utility consumers.
- 2) That the Hocking County Commissioners recognizes that statewide, all departments must endure some level of cuts to their budget; however we urge the Ohio Legislature to place a more reasonable cut so as to preserve the mission of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel.
- 3) The this resolution is declared to be an emergency measure necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, safety and property of the County, and for the further reason that this resolution is required to be immediately effective in order for the General Assembly to enact budget legislation by June 30, 2011.

Vote: Clark Sheets, yea, John Walker, yea, Sandy Ogle, yea



