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BEFORE THE
PENNSYLVANIA PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION

2015 APR 17 PM 3: 43

In re: Proposed Rulemaking Order

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Docket No: L-2014-2411278

**CONSUMERS FOR PAPER OPTIONS' COMMENTS ON THE MARCH 14, 2014 PROPOSED
RULEMAKING AMENDING EXISTING REGULATIONS TO PROHIBIT TARIFF
PROVISIONS THAT CHARGE CUSTOMERS A FEE TO RECEIVE A PAPER BILL**

Consumers for Paper Options, a coalition of individuals and organizations advocating for access to paper-based services and information, strongly supports the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission's proposed rule prohibiting state utilities from charging their customers for paper billing statements.

Paper-based communications and information are critically important for millions of Americans. While regulated entities and governments at every level seek to streamline services, preserving access to paper billing statements and other materials remains imperative.

The digital divide is still very wide in this country, where 50 percent of seniors are without a computer and the 25 percent of American households are without consistent Internet access, according to 2010 U.S. Census data.

The concept of preserving access to paper-based information, particularly government resources, bills and statements, is also supported by a majority of Americans nationwide. In fact, a 2013 survey commissioned by Consumers for Paper Options found that an overwhelming majority of American adults across all demographic groups believe that consumers should not be forced to receive information in an electronic format. In addition, a clear majority of American adults with Internet access believe it is wrong for both the government and the private sector to force consumers to receive information in electronic format only.

In fact, more than 80 percent of respondents said it is not acceptable for companies that send bills, statements, and informational documents such as proxies or privacy statements to force customers to receive those documents in electronic format only, while 82 percent agree that some people simply do not like computers or are not interested in learning how to use them, and that it would be unfair to force these people to receive bills and statements digitally/electronically. ¹

These same conclusions were also borne out by a study conducted this year by the U.S. Postal Service. The analysis, which covered three consecutive months of 2014 billing data for a major U.S. utility company, found that 91 percent of customers chose to receive their statements by mail.²

Consumers want – and should have – the option to choose paper format bills and statements, without being penalized for that choice. Consumers for Paper Options commends the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission for its proposed rule and urges its swift implementation in order to ensure all Americans have equal access to important information.

¹ ["Access for All: American Attitudes Regarding Paper & Digital Information,"](#) InfoTrends, June 2013.

² ["Will the Check be in the Mail? An Examination of Paper and Electronic Transactional Mail"](#) United States Postal Service, Feb. 10, 2015