



MEMORANDUM IN OPPOSITION

S.4399 (Savino) / A.1966 (Dinowitz)

AN ACT to amend the public service law, in relation to creating the state office of the utility consumer advocate

The Capital Region Chamber, representing over 2,400 businesses and organizations from throughout the Capital Region that employ more than 150,000 area residents, is opposed to S.4399 /A.1966, which would create the State Office of the Utility Consumer Advocate.

Specifically, this bill would provide for the be appointment of the Utility Consumer Advocate by the governor to a six-year term. Further, the bill would provide the Utility Consumer Advocate with wide-ranging powers to include: initiating, intervening, and participating on behalf of residential utility consumers in any proceedings before the Public Service Commission, the Federal Regulatory Energy Commission, the Federal Communications Commission, state and local administrative and regulatory agencies, and state and federal courts in any matter or proceeding that may substantially affect the interests of residential utility customers.

The Chamber believes that the creation of a new layer of government, in the form of a Utility Consumer Advocate, is redundant, unwarranted, and wasteful. The sponsors of this legislation are misguided in their premise that consumers in New York are without a voice and real representation when it comes to utility services. This premise is clearly refuted by the facts when it comes to utility services in New York State.

In addition to being strong advocates for themselves, New York utility consumers have numerous existing advocates. These include the governor, members of state legislature, the New York State Public Service Commission, the New York Department of State's Division of Consumer Protection, and the New York State Attorney General's Consumer Frauds and Protection Bureau.

The Chamber contends that there are currently sufficient consumer advocates with expertise in utility services and that New York State consumers are capably served by these existing advocates. The creation of a new state office of the Utility Consumer Advocate is unnecessary and would be a waste of resources.

For these stated reasons, the Capital Region Chamber opposes this legislation.

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