



OFFICE OF THE CONSUMER ADVOCATE
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Office of the Consumer Advocate FY 24/25 Budget – Overview for Governor’s 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.

Meaningful participation in NEPOOL requires approximately nine days of meetings per month, and much research and discussion between meetings, on various aspects of market rules, market operations, and transmission issues. Therefore, like our counterparts in the neighboring states, we have concluded it is necessary to dedicate a fulltime staff person to this work. Our request for a sixth fulltime member of our staff would add a third attorney to our office to do regional electricity work fulltime – including, if necessary, participation in proceedings of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, which oversees ISO New England and NEPOOL.

We have also added a part-time position to our proposed budget to allow us to acquire the assistance of someone with expertise in accounting. Our experience suggests that this would help us participate more meaningfully in utility rate cases at the PUC.

Thus, assuming approval of our budget proposal, the OCA in FY 2024 would consist of the Consumer Advocate (who must by statute be an attorney), two other lawyers, two expert analysts, and a legal assistant. We will remain one of the smallest ratepayer advocate offices in the nation among the roughly 44 states that have one.

Office of the Consumer Advocate FY24/25 Budget Highlights - Governor's Budget Hearing

Position Overview:

	FY23 Adj Auth	FY24 Agency Req	FY25 Agency Req
Permanent Classified	4	5	5
Unclassified Positions	1	1	1
Total Positions	5	6	6

Note: Includes 7D New Attorney IV Position

Current Full Time Permanent Vacancies: 3 vacancies, 2 filled positions = 60% Vacancy Rate

Budget Comparison Highlights (Includes Prioritized Needs):

	FY23 Adj Auth	FY24 Agency Request	FY25 Agency Request
Current Permanent Positions	\$434,414	\$476,723	\$486,773
Other Personnel Costs	\$0	\$55,531	\$56,000
Benefits	\$229,665	\$186,335	\$193,966
Operating Expenses	\$188,733	\$347,950	\$343,950
Other Expenses	\$6,419	\$9,438	\$9,469
Transfers	\$69,658	\$36,404	\$35,542
Total Appropriation	\$928,889	\$1,112,381	\$1,125,700

Percent Change from FY23 → FY24 = 19.75% Increase (0.31% Decrease without Prioritized Needs)

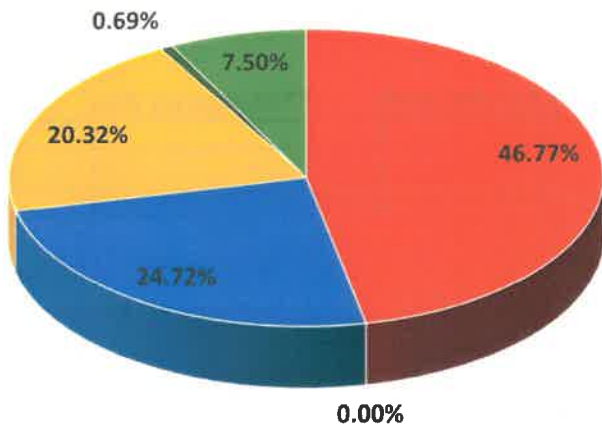
Percent Change from FY23 → FY25 = 21.19% Increase (1.27% Increase without Prioritized Needs)

Percent Change from FY24 → FY25 = 1.2% Increase

Prioritized Needs:

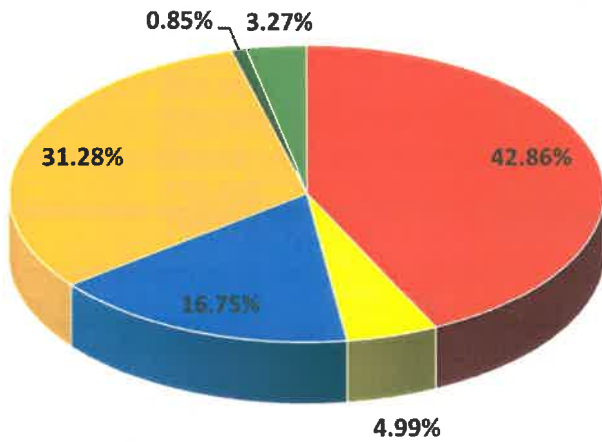
	FY24 Agency Prioritized Needs	FY25 Agency Prioritized Needs
7D New Pos (Attorney IV)	\$111,838	\$117,204
7D Associated Costs	\$16,500	\$10,500
Part Time Pos	\$55,531	\$56,000
Transfer to DoIT	\$363	\$389
DAS Rent	\$2,150	\$911
Total Prioritized Needs	\$186,382	\$185,004

FY23 Adjusted Authorized



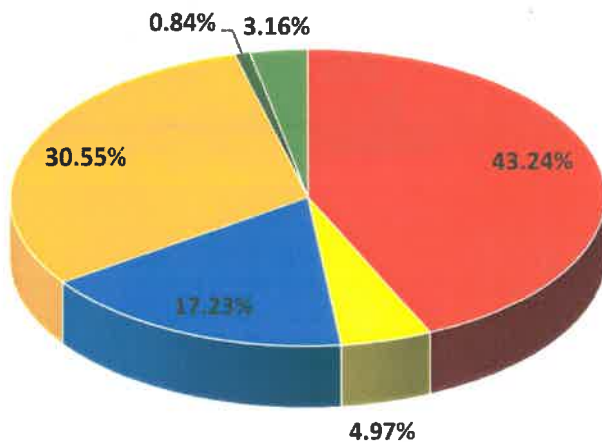
- Current Permanent Positions
- Other Personnel Costs
- Benefits
- Operating Expenses
- Other Expenses
- Transfers

FY24 Agency Request



- Current Permanent Positions
- Other Personnel Costs
- Benefits
- Operating Expenses
- Other Expenses
- Transfers

FY25 Agency Request



- Current Permanent Positions
- Other Personnel Costs
- Benefits
- Operating Expenses
- Other Expenses
- Transfers