

**PENNSYLVANIA PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION
HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA 17120**

**Petition of PPL Electric Utilities
Corporation for a Declaratory
Order Regarding Pilot to Expand
Website and Interactive Voice
Response Capabilities to allow
Customers the Option of Setting Up
Payment Agreements or, in the
Alternative, a Two-Year Waiver of
52 Pa. Code Section 56.97(a)**

**Public Meeting August 18, 2010
2168786-LAW
Docket No. P-2010-2168786**

**JOINT MOTION OF
COMMISSIONER WAYNE GARDNER AND
COMMISSIONER ROBERT F. POWELSON**

Before us today for disposition is the Petition of PPL Electric Utilities (PPL). Ultimately, PPL seeks to implement a pilot program which would expand its website and Interactive Voice Response (IVR) capabilities to allow customers the option, in certain circumstances, to establish payment arrangements either online or through an automated system to avoid termination.

In order to implement these features, PPL seeks either a declaratory ruling that its pilot complies with Section 56.97(a) of our Regulations¹ or, in the alternative, a two-year waiver of Section 56.97(a). The Office of Consumer Advocate (OCA) filed a Notice of Intervention and Answer opposing PPL's Petition. In addition, the Public Utility Law Project (PULP), on behalf of Maryellen Nentwig, filed a Petition to Intervene as well as an Answer opposing PPL's Petition.²

In essence, PPL seeks to provide customers with two additional alternatives to set up payment arrangements. PPL does not propose to reduce its current complement of customer service representatives (CSRs) or restrict customers' ability to speak with a CSR in any way. In fact, PPL points out that through either system, the website or the IVR, customers will always have the option to speak with a CSR and will receive reminders to that effect.

While we do not believe that a declaratory ruling that PPL's proposed program complies with Section 56.97(a) is appropriate, we do believe that granting PPL's requested two-year

¹ 52 Pa. Code § 56.97(a).

² We note that PULP, on behalf of Ms. Nentwig, failed to file a verification with both Ms. Nentwig's Petition to Intervene and Answer to PPL's Petition. Also, the OCA failed to file a verification with its Answer. Verifications are required by Section 1.36 of the Commission's Regulations, 52 Pa. Code § 1.36. As a procedural matter, we move that the Commission grant Ms. Nentwig's Petition to Intervene and accept both her and the OCA's Answers.

waiver of this Section is in the public interest. As cited by PPL in its Petition, this Commission has waived its regulations when it is in the public interest to do so.³

As noted above, both the OCA and Ms. Nentwig, through PULP, opposed PPL's Petition. We do not, however, find the positions of either the OCA or PULP to be persuasive. Both Parties fear that personal contact will be replaced by an automated system. However, as mentioned above, this program will not replace personal contact, but rather is an alternative for customers to choose to employ.

Regulatory agencies often have trouble keeping pace with the innovations of the markets that we regulate. Here, PPL is taking a step to improve customer service and take advantage of advances in technology. It is in the best interest of customers that we reward this forward thinking and further study the benefits of modernizing the ways that utilities interact with their customers.

That is not to say that we are abdicating our responsibility to oversee PPL's communications with its customers. Accordingly, PPL is directed to develop both its scripts for the IVR system and language for its website with the Commission's Bureau of Consumer Services as well as track the costs associated with implementing the program.

Further, PPL is directed to prepare a comprehensive report related to the IVR system and website interface to be filed with the Commission no later than 60 days after the end of the first year of the program's implementation. This report should evaluate the overall effectiveness of the program and include such information as any problems encountered with implementation and program availability, the frequency of and percentage of customer usage, the number of complaints stemming from use of the program, and the number of service terminations prevented from use of the program. The company should also include any information and data that it believes will allow the Commission to fully evaluate the program's effectiveness.

Additionally, we will require that the company provide quarterly statistical reports detailing customer usage of the program and inform the Commission immediately of any problems that arise.

Therefore, we move that

1. The Petition to Intervene of Maryellen Nentwig is granted and 52 Pa. Code Section 1.36 is waived as it pertains to Ms. Nentwig's and the Office of Consumer Advocate's Answers;
2. PPL's Petition for a two-year waiver of 52 Pa. Code Section 56.97(a) is granted for the limited purpose of implementing the program outlined in PPL's instant Petition;
3. PPL work with the Bureau of Consumer Services when developing the scripts to be used in the Interactive Voice Response system and text to be used for the website;

³ See *Petition of Direct Energy Services, LLC for Emergency Order Approving a Retail Aggregation Bidding Program for Customers of Pike County Light & Power Company*, Docket No. P-00062205 (Order entered April 20, 2006).

4. PPL track the costs of associated with the implementation of the proposed program;
5. PPL file quarterly statistical updates with the Commission and immediately inform the Commission of any problems that arise with the program;
6. PPL file a comprehensive report on the Interactive Voice Response system and website interface with the Commission no later than 60 days after the end of the programs' first year;
7. The Office of Special Assistants prepare an Opinion and Order consistent with this Motion.

WAYNE E. GARNER
COMMISSIONER

ROBERT F. POWELSON
COMMISSIONER

DATE: AUGUST 18, 2010