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**Press Release**

**For Immediate Release:**  
March 6, 2017

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**Rate Counsel Releases Updated Consumer Assistance Handbook to Assist With Utility Concerns, Saving Money, and Consumer Rights Information**

(Trenton, NJ) — The New Jersey Division of Rate Counsel, which advocates for consumers in utility rate cases, announced the release of a new edition of its award-winning Consumer Assistance Handbook. The handbook gives answers to utility-related questions and concerns, provides information on consumer utility rights, and tips to help consumers save money.

“We believe consumers will find this handbook to be a great tool in answering a broad variety of utility-related questions,” said Rate Counsel Director Stefanie Brand. “Rate Counsel knows it can be difficult for consumers to understand the complicated utility world, so we’ve designed the handbook to help simplify things,” said Brand.

The 2017 edition of the handbook features information on telephone, electric, gas, cable and water services. Available online and in hard-copy, the handbook is designed to assist consumers with helpful information and tips on saving money on their utility bills, detailed information on how utilities are regulated in New Jersey, and how rates are set. There is even a section on how to read your utility bill and meter, and an explanation of how to make your concerns heard at public hearings.

Aimed at helping consumers make informed decisions about their utility concerns, consumers will find sections in the handbook on how to find and fix water leaks; information on financial assistance programs for all utilities; an explanation of taxes and fees on your utility bills; and what to ask when “shopping” for an alternative/third-party electricity provider. In addition, consumers will find tips to help prevent telemarketing calls, and a consumer bill of rights that applies to all utilities.

The book also includes information on Rate Counsel's role in utility cases before the Board of Public Utilities and Federal agencies and how Rate Counsel assists customers. The handbook provides contact information for regulated utilities statewide. In 2014, Rate Counsel's Consumer Assistance Handbook won an award from the Documents Association of New Jersey (DANJ) as "New Jersey Document of the Year," an award given to a publication issued by a state agency that the state's documents librarians feel is especially "useful or informative."

For more information on the new 2017 version of the Consumer Assistance Handbook offered by the New Jersey Division of Rate Counsel, please visit our website at <http://www.state.nj.us/rpa/> or call 609-984-1460.

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### **About the Division of Rate Counsel**

The Division of Rate Counsel represents and protects the interests of all utility customers — residential, small business, commercial and industrial — whenever utilities in New Jersey seek changes in their rates for delivery of natural gas, electric, water, wastewater, telephone or cable TV services. Rate Counsel also advocates for consumers in certain insurance matters. The mission of the Division is to make sure that all classes of utility consumers receive safe, adequate and essential services at affordable rates that are just and nondiscriminatory. Additional information on this and other utility matters can be found at the Division's website at <http://www.state.nj.us/rpa/>.