CHAPTER 3

Public Service Commission

Article 1

General Provisions

**SECTION 58-3-5. Definitions.**

 As used in this chapter:

 (1) "Business with which he is associated" means a business of which the person or a member of his immediate family is a director, an officer, owner, employee, a compensated agent, or holder of stock.

 (2) "Immediate family" means an individual who is:

 (a) a child residing in the person's household;

 (b) a spouse of the person; or

 (c) an individual claimed by the person or the person's spouse as a dependent for income tax purposes.

 (3) "Commission" means the Public Service Commission.

 (4) "Hearing officer" means a person employed by the commission to serve as a presiding officer in an adjudicative proceeding before the commission.

 (5) "Regulatory staff" means the executive director or the executive director and employees of the Office of Regulatory Staff.

 (6) "Public utility" means public utility as defined in Section 58-5-10, telephone utility as defined in Section 58-9-10, government-owned telecommunications service provider as defined in Section 58-9-2610, radio common carrier as defined in Section 58-11-10, carriers governed by Chapter 13 of Title 58, railroads and railways as defined in Section 58-17-10, motor vehicle carrier as defined in Section 58-23-10, or electrical utility as defined in Section 58-27-10.

 (7) "Review committee" means the State Regulation of Public Utilities Review Committee.

HISTORY: 2004 Act No. 175, § 4, eff February 18, 2004.

**SECTION 58-3-10. Continuation of Public Service Commission.**

 (A) The commission, as constituted under law in effect before February 18, 2004, by the Governor, is reconstituted to continue in existence with the appointment and qualification of the members as prescribed in this article and with the changes in duties and powers as prescribed in this title.

 (B) Nothing in this act affects the commission's jurisdiction over matters pending before the commission, on or before February 18, 2004.

HISTORY: 1962 Code § 58-51; 1952 Code § 58-51; 1942 Code § 8199; 1932 Code § 8243; 1922 (32) 956; 1935 (39) 25; 2004 Act No. 175, § 4, eff February 18, 2004.

**SECTION 58-3-20. Membership; election and qualifications; terms; vacancies.**

Pursuant to 2025 Act No. 74, § 1, and 2025 Act No. 75, § 1, the provisions of this section prohibiting the General Assembly from holding an election until a final determination is made by the courts regarding its review of congressional districts' compliance with subsec. (C) of this section is suspended for 2025 and 2026.

 (A) The commission is composed of seven members to be elected by the General Assembly in the manner prescribed by this chapter. Each member must have:

 (1) a baccalaureate or more advanced degree from:

 (a) a recognized institution of higher learning requiring face-to-face contact between its students and instructors prior to completion of the academic program;

 (b) an institution of higher learning that has been accredited by a regional or national accrediting body; or

 (c) an institution of higher learning chartered before 1962; and

 (2) a background of substantial duration and an expertise in at least one of the following:

 (a) energy issues;

 (b) telecommunications issues;

 (c) consumer protection and advocacy issues;

 (d) water and wastewater issues;

 (e) finance, economics, and statistics;

 (f) accounting;

 (g) engineering; or

 (h) law.

 (B)(1) Beginning in 2004, the members of the Public Service Commission must be elected to staggered terms. In 2004, the members representing the Second, Fourth, and Sixth Congressional Districts must be elected for terms ending on June 30, 2006, and until their successors are elected and qualify. Thereafter, members representing the Second, Fourth, and Sixth Congressional Districts must be elected to terms of four years and until their successors are elected and qualify. In 2004, the members representing the First, Third, and Fifth Congressional Districts and the State at large must be elected for terms ending on June 30, 2008, and until their successors are elected and qualify. Thereafter, members representing the First, Third, and Fifth Congressional Districts and the State at large must be elected to terms of four years and until their successors are elected and qualify. Notwithstanding the provisions of this section, members representing the First, Third, and Fifth Congressional Districts shall serve until the expiration of their terms, and in 2013, members representing the First, Third, and Fifth Congressional Districts must be elected for terms ending on June 30, 2016, and until their successors are elected and qualified.

 (2) In the event there are Seven Congressional Districts, the member elected from the State at large shall serve until the expiration of his term, and in 2013, a member representing the Seventh Congressional District must be elected for a term ending on June 30, 2016, and until his successor is elected and qualified. Thereafter, the member representing the Seventh Congressional District must be elected to terms of four years and until his successor is elected and qualified. Upon the election and qualification of the member representing the Seventh Congressional District, the at-large member elected to satisfy the requirements of subsection (C) immediately shall cease to be a member of the commission.

 (C) The General Assembly must provide for the election of the seven-member commission and elect its members based upon the congressional districts established by the General Assembly pursuant to the latest official United States Decennial Census. If the number of congressional districts is less than seven, additional members must be elected at large to provide for a seven-member commission. In the event the congressional districts established by the General Assembly are under review by a court for compliance with statutory or constitutional requirements, an election scheduled pursuant to this section shall not be held until a final determination is made by the courts regarding the congressional districts. The inability to hold an election due to judicial review of the congressional districts does not constitute a vacancy on the commission and the commissioners serve until their successors are elected and qualify.

 (D) The Governor may fill vacancies in the office of commissioner until the successor in the office for a full term or an unexpired term, as applicable, has been elected by the General Assembly. In cases where a vacancy occurs on the commission when the General Assembly is not in session, the Governor may fill the vacancy by an interim appointment. The Governor must report the interim appointment to the General Assembly and must forward a formal appointment at its next ensuing regular session.

HISTORY: 1962 Code § 58-52; 1952 Code § 58-52; 1942 Code § 8200; 1932 Code § 8244; 1922 (32) 956; 1932 (37) 1380; 1935 (39) 25; 1935 (48) 323; 1979 Act No. 167, § 3, eff July 1, 1979; 1993 Act No. 181, § 1549, eff July 1, 1993; 1994 Act No. 493, § 1, eff in the election cycle of 1998 and upon approval of the Governor (approved July 14, 1994); 2004 Act No. 175, § 4, eff February 18, 2004, as to subsections (A), (B), (C), (D), (F); 2004 Act No. 175, § 4, eff July 1, 2004, as to subsection (E); 2012 Act No. 279, § 25, eff June 26, 2012; 2022 Act No. 220 (H.4062), § 2, eff May 23, 2022.

**SECTION 58-3-21. Subsistence allowance.**

 While hearing cases or any other matter within the commission's jurisdiction or on other official business outside the county in which he resides, within fifty miles of his residence, a public service commissioner is entitled to a subsistence allowance in the amount of thirty-five dollars per day plus such mileage allowance for travel as is provided for other employees of the State. While hearing cases or any other matter within the commission's jurisdiction or on other official business at a location fifty miles or more from his residence, a public service commissioner is entitled to a subsistence allowance in the amount as provided for members of the General Assembly plus such mileage allowance for travel as is provided for other employees of the State.

HISTORY: 2022 Act No. 220 (H.4062), § 1, eff May 23, 2022.

**SECTION 58-3-22. Legal advice; meetings.**

 Members of the Public Service Commission may meet together to receive technical and legal advice from the commission's staff on matters pending on the commission's docket, provided that the:

 (1) advice is to aid the members in carrying out their responsibilities on the commission;

 (2) advice is provided in a manner consistent with the South Carolina Code of Judicial Conduct; and

 (3) members who attend such a meeting are not authorized to make recommendations to or transact any business for the Public Service Commission.

 A meeting between the members of the Public Service Commission and commission staff pursuant to this section does not constitute a "public meeting" for purposes of the Freedom of Information Act.

HISTORY: 2022 Act No. 220 (H.4062), § 1, eff May 23, 2022.

**SECTION 58-3-24. General Assembly members and immediate family ineligible for election to commission.**

 No member of the General Assembly or member of his immediate family shall be elected to the commission while the member is serving in the General Assembly; nor shall a member of the General Assembly or a member of his immediate family be elected to the Public Service Commission for a period of four years after the member either:

 (1) ceases to be a member of the General Assembly; or

 (2) fails to file for election to the General Assembly in accordance with Section 7-11-15.

HISTORY: 1979 Act No. 167 § 4, eff July 1, 1979; 1993 Act No. 181, § 1550, eff July 1, 1993; 2004 Act No. 175, § 4, eff February 18, 2004.

**SECTION 58-3-25. Conflict of interest; commission members and employees.**

 (A) Unless otherwise provided by law, no person may serve as a member of the commission if the commission regulates any business with which that person is associated.

 (B) If the commission regulates a business with which an employee of the commission is associated, the employee must annually file a statement of economic interests notwithstanding the provisions of Section 8-13-1110.

 (C) No person may be an employee of the commission if the commission regulates a business with which the employee is associated, and this relationship creates a continuing or frequent conflict with the performance of his official responsibilities.

HISTORY: 2004 Act No. 175, § 4, eff February 18, 2004.

**SECTION 58-3-30. Oaths; Code of Judicial Conduct applicable; ethics and the Administrative Procedure Act workshop.**

 (A) The commissioners shall take the oath of office provided by the Constitution and the oaths prescribed by law for state officers.

 (B) The commissioners and commission employees are bound by the Code of Judicial Conduct, as contained in Rule 501 of the South Carolina Appellate Court Rules, except as provided in Section 58-3-260, and the State Ethics Commission must enforce and administer those rules pursuant to Section 8-13-320. In addition, commissioners and commission employees must comply with the applicable requirements of Chapter 13 of Title 8.

 (C) Each year, the commissioners and their employees must attend a workshop of at least six contact hours concerning ethics and the Administrative Procedures Act. This workshop must be developed with input from the review committee.

HISTORY: 1962 Code § 58-53; 1952 Code § 58-53; 1942 Code § 8200; 1932 Code § 8244; 1922 (32) 956; 1932 (37) 1380; 1935 (39) 25; 2004 Act No. 175, § 4, eff February 18, 2004.

**SECTION 58-3-40. Election of chairman; hearing officer.**

 (A) The commission must elect one of its members as chairman for a period of two years.

 (B) The chairman is the chief executive and administrative officer of the commission.

 (C)(1) Upon the request of any party or any commissioner, the commission may employ a hearing officer who may hear and determine procedural motions or other matters not determinative of the merits of the proceedings and made prior to hearing; and, at the hearing, shall make all rulings on nondispositive motions and objections. If qualified pursuant to item (3), a commission staff attorney may serve as hearing officer.

 (2) The hearing officer has full authority, subject to being overruled by the commission, to rule on questions concerning the conduct of the case and the admission of evidence but may not participate in the determination on the merits of any case.

 (3) The hearing officer must be an attorney qualified to practice in all courts of this State with a minimum of eight years' practice experience.

HISTORY: 1962 Code § 58-54; 1952 Code § 58-54; 1942 Code § 8201; 1932 Code § 8245; 1922 (32) 956; 1979 Act No. 167 § 7, eff July 1, 1979; 2004 Act No. 175, § 4, eff February 18, 2004.

**SECTION 58-3-50. Administration of oaths.**

 The clerk of the commission may administer oaths.

HISTORY: 1962 Code § 58-55; 1952 Code § 58-55; 1942 Code § 8292-22; 1932 Code § 8283; Civ. C. '22 § 4831; Civ. C. '12 § 3155; Civ. C. '02 § 2077; G. S. 1465; R. S. 1640; 1892 (21) 16; 1935 (39) 25; 2004 Act No. 175, § 4, eff February 18, 2004.

§ 58-3-60. Employment of clerk, attorneys and other staff; salaries; travel authorization and approval; exception as to functions of Office of Regulatory Staff

 (A) The commission is authorized and empowered to employ: a chief clerk and deputy clerk; a commission attorney and assistant commission attorneys; hearing officers; hearing reporters; and such other professional, administrative, technical, and clerical personnel as the commission determines to be necessary in the proper discharge of the commission's duties and responsibilities as provided by law. The chairman must organize and direct the work of the commission staff. The salaries of the chairman, the commissioners, and the chief clerk shall not be construed as limiting the maximum salary which may be paid to other employees of the Public Service Commission. The commission staff shall not appear as a party in commission proceedings and shall not offer testimony on issues before the commission.

 (B) Subject to Section 58-3-580, the commission must be staffed and equipped to perform the functions set forth in this title except for those responsibilities and functions reserved to the Office of Regulatory Staff. The expenses must be paid from the assessments collected pursuant to Section 58-3-100. The chairman, within allowed budgetary limits and as otherwise allowed by law, must authorize and approve travel, subsistence, and related expenses of personnel incurred while traveling on official business.

 (C) The commissioners shall not supervise the Office of Regulatory Staff.

 (D) The commission shall not inspect, audit, or examine public utilities. The inspection, auditing, and examination of public utilities is solely the responsibility of the Office of Regulatory Staff.

HISTORY: 1962 Code § 58-56; 1952 Code § 58-56; 1942 Code § 8519; 1932 Code § 8519; 1925 (34) 252; 1950 (46) 2466; 1983 Act No. 138, § 11, eff June 15, 1983; 2004 Act No. 175, § 4, eff January 1, 2005.

**SECTION 58-3-65. Chief clerk; salary recommendations.**

 Beginning with Fiscal Year 2025-2026, the salary for the commission's chief clerk must be based on recommendations by the Agency Head Salary Commission to the General Assembly as provided in Sections 8-11-160 and 8-11-165.

HISTORY: 2025 Act No. 41 (H.3309), § 39, eff May 12, 2025.

**SECTION 58-3-70. Compensation of commission members; limitations on other employment.**

Section effective "beginning with the fiscal year immediately following the next Public Service Commission election after" May 12, 2025.

 The commission members shall receive a salary in an amount equal to ninety percent of the salary fixed for Associate Justices of the Supreme Court of South Carolina. Each commissioner must devote full time to his duties as a commissioner and must not engage in any other employment, business, profession, or vocation during the normal business hours of the commission.

HISTORY: 1962 Code § 58-57; 1952 Code § 58-57; 1942 Code § 8201; 1932 Code § 8245; 1922 (32) 956; 1951 (47) 506; 1964 (53) 1918; 2004 Act No. 175, § 4, eff February 18, 2004; 2025 Act No. 41 (H.3309), § 31.A, eff May 12, 2025.

**SECTION 58-3-90. Meetings of Commission; quorum.**

 The commission must meet at least once each month, and the chairman must call a meeting at any other time upon the written request of any two members of the commission. A majority of the commissioners constitutes a quorum for the transaction of all business pertaining to their office.

HISTORY: 1962 Code § 58-59; 1952 Code § 58-59; 1942 Code § 8201; 1932 Code § 8245; 1922 (32) 956; 2004 Act No. 175, § 4, eff February 18, 2004.

**SECTION 58-3-100. Assessment for expenses of Commission; Commission an other-funded agency.**

 Except as specifically provided in Sections 58-5-940 and 58-27-50, all other expenses of the Public Service Commission must be borne by the public utilities subject to the commission's jurisdiction. On or before the first day of July in each year, the Department of Revenue must assess each public utility, railway company, household goods carrier, and hazardous waste for disposal carrier its proportion of the expenses in proportion to its gross income from operation in this State in the year ending on the thirtieth day of June preceding that on which the assessment is made which is due and payable on or before July fifteenth. The assessments must be charged against the companies by the Department of Revenue and collected by the department in the manner provided by law for the collection of taxes from the companies including the enforcement and collection provisions of Article 1, Chapter 54 of Title 12 and paid, less the department's actual incremental increase in the cost of administration into the state treasury as other taxes collected by the department.

 The commission must certify to the South Carolina Department of Revenue annually, but no later than May first, the amounts to be assessed.

 The commission shall operate as an other-funded agency.

HISTORY: 1962 Code § 58-60; 1952 Code § 58-60; 1942 Code §§ 8205, 8232, 8292-11, 8543; 1932 Code §§ 8249, 8250, 8292, 8543; Civ. C. '22 §§ 4810, 4840, 5026; Civ. C. '12 §§ 3141, 3164, 3328; Civ. C. '02 §§ 2066, 2221; G. S. 1453, 1454; R. S. 1626, 1628, 1629; 1882 (17) 817; 1892 (21) 10; 1898 (22) 780; 1904 (24) 496; 1922 (32) 956; 1935 (39) 25; 1982 Act No. 331, § 1, eff April 9, 1982; 1989 Act No. 184, § 1, eff June 8, 1989; 1993 Act No. 181, § 1552, eff July 1, 1993; 1994 Act No. 497, Part II, § 12A, eff July 1, 1994; 1995 Act No. 145, Part II, § 68A, eff May 1, 1996; 2004 Act No. 175, § 4, eff February 18, 2004; 2006 Act No. 318, § 1, eff May 24, 2006.

**SECTION 58-3-110. Advance of funds for office of Commission.**

 The appropriation for the commission's office must be advanced by the State until it has been collected from the corporations liable therefor and, when collected, must be placed in the state treasury.

HISTORY: 1962 Code § 58-61; 1952 Code § 58-61; 1942 Code § 3195; 1932 Code § 3195; Civ. C. '22 § 891; Civ. C. '12 § 811; 1909 (26) 281; 1935 (39) 25; 2004 Act No. 175, § 4, eff February 18, 2004.

**SECTION 58-3-130. State agencies, boards, and commissions must supply records and information to Commission.**

 Upon demand by the Office of Regulatory Staff, each state department, board, and commission, and each officer or agent of the State must furnish to the Office of Regulatory Staff, for inspection and confidential use, any record or information on file with the department, board, commission, or officer, as appropriate, concerning the property values, operation, income, or other matter of any person doing business as a public utility in this State.

HISTORY: 1962 Code § 58-63; 1952 Code § 58-63; 1942 Code § 8216; 1932 Code § 8258; 1930 (36) 1297; 1935 (39) 25; 2004 Act No. 175, § 4, eff January 1, 2005.

**SECTION 58-3-140. Powers to regulate public utilities.**

 (A) Except as otherwise provided in Chapter 9 of this title, the commission is vested with power and jurisdiction to supervise and regulate the rates and service of every public utility in this State and to fix just and reasonable standards, classifications, regulations, practices, and measurements of service to be furnished, imposed, or observed, and followed by every public utility in this State.

 (B) The commission must develop and publish a policy manual which must set forth guidelines for the administration of the commission. All procedures must incorporate state requirements and good management practices to ensure the efficient and economical utilization of resources.

 (C) The commission must facilitate access to its general rate request orders in contested matters involving more than one hundred thousand dollars by publishing an order guide which indexes and cross-references orders by subject matter and case name. The order guide must be made available for public inspection.

 (D) The commission must promulgate regulations to require the direct testimony of witnesses appearing on behalf of utilities and of witnesses appearing on behalf of persons having formal intervenor status, such testimony to be reduced to writing and prefiled with the commission in advance of any hearing. In contested case proceedings, the applicant seeking relief from the commission shall have the right to prefile rebuttal testimony responsive to the direct prefiled testimony of other parties. The commission may allow supplemental testimony in cases where new matters arise after the filing of direct testimony, provided that parties shall have the right to respond to such supplemental testimony. The procedural schedule for each contested case proceeding shall include dates for completion of each phase of discovery, including discovery related to the application or other initial pleading as filed, direct testimony of the applicant, direct testimony of the Office of Regulatory Staff and other parties and intervenors, rebuttal testimony of the applicant, and surrebuttal testimony. Except upon showing of exceptional circumstances or surprise, all discovery must be completed not less than ten days prior to the hearing. The party with the burden of proof must be permitted to open and close its case, including the presentation of responsive witness testimony.

 (E) The commission may convene public hearings to allow public utility customers to address the commission as public witnesses without intervening in the proceedings and without subjecting themselves to discovery or prefiling testimony. Public witnesses may address the commission on issues related to customer service, utility operations, reliability, economic hardship, affordability, environmental concerns, or other matters that affect them. The public utility and the Office of Regulatory Staff shall work to investigate and resolve individual service issues raised by public witnesses.

 (F) Any other provision of law notwithstanding, to the extent the commission is authorized by the General Assembly to employ an independent third-party consultant to assist the commission in its duties with respect to a matter before the commission, such consultant may only rely upon evidence introduced by a party to that proceeding into the record subject to the requirements of the South Carolina Administrative Procedures Act. Further, the commission may not give any consultant employed by the commission party status in a proceeding before the commission.

 (G) Nothing in this section may be interpreted to repeal or modify specific exclusions from the commission's jurisdiction pursuant to Title 58 or any other title.

 (H) When required to be filed, tariffs must be filed with the office of the chief clerk of the commission and, on that same day, provided to the Executive Director of the Office of Regulatory Staff.

HISTORY: 1962 Code § 58-1; 1952 Code § 58-1; 1942 Code § 8204; 1932 Code § 8248; 1922 (32) 956; 1935 (39) 25; 1983 Act No. 138, § 7, eff June 15, 1983; 2004 Act No. 175, § 4, eff January 1, 2005; 2025 Act No. 41 (H.3309), § 2, eff May 12, 2025.

**SECTION 58-3-142. Limitation on appearance of members of General Assembly in rate-fixing proceedings.**

 No member of the General Assembly or any member of a member's law firm shall appear before the commission in any rate-fixing proceeding by representing any party in the proceeding for any purposes including political purposes, and it is the duty of the presiding commissioner or hearing officer to enforce the provisions of this section. However, this section does not apply to any member of the General Assembly appearing as a witness on either side of any hearing.

HISTORY: 1979 Act No. 167 § 6, eff July 1, 1979; 2004 Act No. 175, § 4, eff February 18, 2004.

**SECTION 58-3-170. Commission empowered to fix agreements, contracts, and rates between common carriers and telephone and telegraph companies.**

 In case of failure of common carriers and telephone and telegraph companies to agree, the commission must supervise and fix all agreements, contracts, rates, or the divisions thereof and regulations between or among common carriers and telephone and telegraph companies, of whatever kind, placed under the control or supervision of the commission.

 Except for rates, transactions affecting rates, or transactions affecting service areas, the provisions of this section do not apply to transactions between a telephone cooperative association and its subsidiary corporation or cooperative association.

HISTORY: 1962 Code § 58-8; 1952 Code § 58-8; 1942 Code § 8310; 1932 Code § 8310; Civ. C. '22 § 4857; 1920 (31) 1064; 1935 (39) 25; 1983 Act No. 67 § 2, eff May 26, 1983; 2004 Act No. 175, § 4, eff February 18, 2004.

**SECTION 58-3-180. Promulgation of regulations to effectuate Section 58-3-170.**

 The commission must promulgate regulations as necessary to effectuate the provisions of Section 58-3-170.

HISTORY: 1962 Code § 58-9; 1952 Code § 58-9; 1942 Code § 8311; 1932 Code § 8311; Civ. C. '22 § 4858; 1920 (31) 1064; 1935 (39) 25; 2004 Act No. 175, § 4, eff February 18, 2004.

**SECTION 58-3-190. Reports by entities subject to commission jurisdiction; audits by Office of Regulatory Staff.**

 (A) The commission has the authority to require periodic written reports to be submitted by persons or entities subject to its jurisdiction. Such reports must relate to matters within the jurisdiction of the commission and must be filed with the commission and provided to the Office of Regulatory Staff.

 (B) If, in the judgment of the commission, any report referred to in subsection (A) is not furnished within a reasonable time or does not satisfactorily address the matters the commission requires to be addressed in such reports, the commission must give the person or entity written notice of the reasons why the report is not satisfactory, and the person or entity shall have a reasonable time period in which to comply with the requirements of the notice.

 (C) The commission may request the Office of Regulatory Staff to make, pursuant to Section 58-4-50(A)(2), an inspection, audit, or examination of the persons or entities referred to in subsection (A) regarding matters the commission requires to be addressed in the reports referred to in subsection (A).

HISTORY: 1962 Code § 58-13; 1952 Code § 58-13; 1942 Code § 8214; 1932 Code § 8256; 1930 (36) 1297; 1935 (39) 25; 2004 Act No. 175, § 4, eff January 1, 2005.

**SECTION 58-3-200. Inspections, audits and examinations.**

 The commission has the authority to initiate inspections, audits, and examinations of all persons and entities subject to its jurisdiction. Such inspections, audits, and examinations must relate to matters within the commission's jurisdiction. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the commission must not conduct such inspections, audits, and examinations itself, but must request that they be conducted by the Office of Regulatory Staff pursuant to Section 58-4-50(A)(2).

HISTORY: 1962 Code § 58-14; 1952 Code § 58-14; 1942 Code § 8215; 1932 Code § 8257; 1930 (36) 1297; 1935 (39) 25; 2004 Act No. 175, § 4, eff January 1, 2005.

**SECTION 58-3-220. Disposition of penalties and forfeitures for failure to comply with orders of commission.**

 One-half of all penalties and forfeitures collected from railroad, express, telegraph, and telephone companies for failure to comply with orders of the commission must be paid into the state treasury, and the other half into the county treasury of the county in which the suit is brought imposing the penalty or forfeiture collected. The revenues accruing from these collections must be used for general state and county purposes.

HISTORY: 1962 Code § 58-17; 1952 Code § 58-17; 1942 Code § 8224; 1932 Code § 8267; Civ. C. '22 § 4815; Civ. C. '12 § 3143; 1911 (27) 158; 1935 (39) 25; 2004 Act No. 175, § 4, eff February 18, 2004.

**SECTION 58-3-225. Conduct of hearings; absence of commissioner; ejection of disruptive party; contempt; withdrawal of petition.**

 (A) Hearings conducted before the commission must be conducted under dignified and orderly procedures designed to protect the rights of all parties. If a commissioner is absent from or leaves the hearing for fifteen consecutive minutes or longer, the commission must recess the hearing until the commissioner is present, or the commissioner may not participate in the deliberations or vote on the matter. If a commissioner is absent from or leaves the hearing for less than fifteen consecutive minutes, the commission shall cause the record of the proceeding to reflect the absence and the duration of the absence.

 (B) All persons appearing in a representative capacity before the commission in its proceedings should conform to the standards of ethical conduct required of attorneys practicing before the courts of this State.

 (C) Any person, firm, or corporation who disregards commission orders after due notice or who engages in conduct calculated to bring the due and orderly course of commission proceedings into disrespect or disregard, or to interfere with or prejudice parties or their witnesses during the proceedings may, by order of the commission or its presiding officer, be ejected for the remainder of that day from the proceedings. If that person, firm, or corporation engages in further conduct resulting in ejection for a second day or portion thereof in the same proceeding, he must also be declared in contempt and cited to any circuit judge, who may punish by a fine not to exceed five hundred dollars or imprisonment not to exceed thirty days, or both. The proscribed conduct includes, but is not limited to, any person, firm, or corporation intentionally delaying the proceedings by the injection of matters determined not to be relevant after a proper warning that the matters shall not be pursued.

 (D) The provisions of this section must not be construed as limiting any powers of the commission under existing law.

 (E) A party may withdraw its petition, application, complaint, counterclaim, cross-claim, or third-party claim from any commission docket one time as a matter of right, and without prejudice, provided that it does so prior to the later of the date that responsive pleadings are filed or the date that the withdrawing party's direct testimony addressing such petition, application, complaint, counterclaim, cross-claim, or third-party claim is due to be filed with the commission. A party may thereafter withdraw its petition, application, complaint, counterclaim, cross-claim, or third-party claim from any commission docket only upon order of the commission and upon such terms and conditions as the commission considers proper.

HISTORY: 1980 Act No. 440, § 2, eff May 26, 1980; 2004 Act No. 175, § 4, eff July 1, 2004.

**SECTION 58-3-230. Unauthorized change of utility provider service; authorization; penalties; "customer" defined.**

 (A) A utility, as defined in Sections 58-5-10, 58-9-10, and 58-27-10, may not submit a change request for a customer's utility service until the customer's authorization for the change is obtained by using marketing or anti-slamming guidelines approved by the appropriate federal and state regulatory agencies. In the case of utilities defined by Section 58-9-10, the appropriate regulatory agencies are the Federal Communications Commission and the South Carolina Public Service Commission. If a utility other than that directly receiving the customer authorization subsequently effects the change into billing or operational systems, it is not:

 (1) required to secure additional customer authorization; and

 (2) liable pursuant to this section for errors, omissions, or unauthorized changes submitted by the utility originating the request.

 (B) A utility defined in Sections 58-5-10 and 58-27-10 that violates subsection (A) is liable to the customer for all charges incurred by the customer, in excess of those normally incurred through his designated provider, during the period of the unauthorized change.

 (C) A utility defined in Section 58-9-10 that violates subsection (A) is liable as specified in Federal Communications Commission guidelines promulgated pursuant to the United States Code of Laws, Chapter 1, Title 47.

 (D) A utility, as defined in Sections 58-5-10, 58-9-10, and 58-27-10, that wilfully, knowingly, or repeatedly violates the provisions of subsection (A) is subject to a fine of not less than two thousand dollars nor more than ten thousand dollars for each violation. The fines collected by the Public Service Commission pursuant to this section must remain with the commission and be used to offset costs associated with this section.

 (E) As used in this section "customer" means:

 (1) the party identified in the account records of a utility as the one responsible for payment of the utility bill;

 (2) an adult person authorized by the responsible party to change utility services or to charge services to the account; or

 (3) a person contractually or otherwise lawfully authorized to represent the responsible party.

HISTORY: 2005 Act No. 5, § 1, eff July 1, 2004.

**SECTION 58-3-240. Definitions; exemption from certain regulations for certain utility services.**

 (A) As used in this section:

 (1) "Privately-owned industrial park" means a privately- owned tract of real property which is used solely for industrial uses, in which the provider of utility services owns or operates an industrial premises and owns or operates facilities for the provision of utility services and on which there is located one or more industrial users. " Privately-owned industrial park" also means those additional tracts as may be subsequently incorporated into the industrial park.

 (2) "Industrial premises" means a building, structure, plant, or facility which is located in a privately-owned industrial park and is owned or leased by an industrial user.

 (3) "Industrial user" means any person, corporation, or association which is engaged in the business of manufacturing, processing, assembling, fabricating, or related work.

 (4) "Provider of utility services" means a person, corporation, or association, other than a regulated public utility or its affiliates, that offers or provides, or both, utility services to the public or any portion of it outside a privately-owned industrial park, which provides any or all of those services which are defined in Chapters 5 and 7 of this title, excluding gas, and subject to regulation by the commission and where the services are provided to an industrial user in a privately-owned industrial park.

 (5) "Jurisdictional utilities" means those persons, corporations, associations, or political subdivisions which provide services subject to the jurisdiction of the commission under Chapters 5 and 7 of this title, excluding gas.

 (B) The provisions of Chapters 5 and 7 of this title, excluding gas, are not applicable to the provision of utility services to industrial users of these services where the industrial users are located in a privately-owned industrial park where the provider of utility services and the industrial user have agreed in writing to the terms and conditions for the provision of utility services and where all jurisdictional utilities which would have a right to provide any or all of the utility services have agreed in writing to waive their right to further notice and opportunity for hearing with respect to the written agreement and the provision of the services under the terms of the agreement.

 (C) Within twenty days after the execution of a written agreement between a provider of utility services and an industrial user pursuant to subsection (B), the provider of utility services must file with the commission and provide to the Office of Regulatory Staff, for information only, the written agreement and all waivers executed by jurisdictional utilities pursuant to subsection (B).

HISTORY: 2001 Act No. 47, § 1, eff May 29, 2001; 2004 Act No. 175, § 4, eff February 18, 2004; 2006 Act No. 318, § 2, eff May 24, 2006.

**SECTION 58-3-250. Final orders and decisions; contents; service on parties.**

 (A) All final orders and decisions of the commission must be sufficient in detail to enable the court on appeal to determine the controverted questions presented in the proceedings and must include:

 (1) findings and conclusions, and the reasons or bases therefor, upon all the material issues of fact or law presented in the record; and

 (2) the appropriate rule, order, sanction, relief, or statement of denial thereof.

 (B) A copy of every final order or decision under the seal of the commission must be served by electronic service, or registered or certified mail, upon all parties to the proceeding or their attorneys. Service of every final order or decision upon a party or upon the attorney must be made by emailing a copy of the order to the party's email address provided to the commission or by mailing a copy to the party's last known address. If no email or other address is known, however, service shall be made by leaving a copy with the chief clerk of the commission. The order takes effect and becomes operative when served unless otherwise designated and continues in force either for a period designated by the commission or until changed or revoked by the commission. If, in the judgment of the commission, an order cannot be complied with within the time designated, the commission may grant and prescribe additional time as is reasonably necessary to comply with the order and, on application and for good cause shown, may extend the time for compliance fixed in its order.

HISTORY: 2004 Act No. 175, § 4, eff February 18, 2004; 2012 Act No. 208, § 1, eff June 7, 2012; 2025 Act No. 41 (H.3309), § 3, eff May 12, 2025.

**SECTION 58-3-260. Communications between commission and parties prohibited; exempt communications; disclosure of improper communications; penalties.**

 (A) For purposes of this section:

 (1) "Proceeding" means a contested case, generic proceeding, or other matter to be adjudicated, decided, or arbitrated by the commission.

 (2) "Person" means a party to a proceeding pending before the commission, a member of the Office of Regulatory Staff, a representative of a party to a proceeding pending before the commission, individuals, corporations, partnerships, limited liability companies, elected officials of state government, and other public and elected officials.

 (3) "Communication" means the transmitting of information by any mode including, but not limited to, oral, written, or electronic.

 (4) "Allowable ex parte communication briefing" means any communication that is conducted pursuant to the procedure outlined in subsection (D)(6) of this section.

 (5) "Communication of supplemental legal citation" means the submission, subsequent to the submission of post-hearing briefs or proposed orders in a proceeding, of statutes, regulations, judicial or administrative decisions that are enacted, promulgated, or determined after the submission of post-hearing briefs or proposed orders.

 (B)(1) Except as otherwise provided herein or unless required for the disposition of ex parte matters specifically authorized by law, a commissioner, hearing officer, or commission employee shall not communicate, directly or indirectly, regarding any issue that is an issue in any proceeding or can reasonably be expected to become an issue in any proceeding with any person without notice and opportunity for all parties to participate in the communication, nor shall any person communicate, directly or indirectly, regarding any issue that is an issue in any proceeding or can reasonably be expected to become an issue in any proceeding with any commissioner, hearing officer, or commission employee without notice and opportunity for all parties to participate in the communication.

 (2) "Issue" does not include:

 (a) general information concerning the operations, administration, planning, projects, customer service, storms or storm response, accidents, outages, or investments of an entity regulated by the commission that is not confidential and proprietary and is available to the public; or

 (b) any confidential information that affects energy security, such as physical or cybersecurity matters, provided that such information is also provided to the Executive Director of the Office of Regulatory Staff.

Any communication pursuant to subitems (a) or (b) provided to the commission must also be provided in writing and must be posted on the commission's website with any confidential information redacted.

 (C) Commissioners must limit their consideration of matters before them to the record presented by the parties and may not rely on material not presented in the record by the parties.

 (D) The following communications are exempt from the prohibitions of subsection (B) of this section:

 (1) a communication concerning compliance with procedural requirements if the procedural matter is not an area of controversy in a proceeding;

 (2) statements made by a commission employee who is or may reasonably be expected to be involved in formulating a decision, rule, or order in a proceeding, where the statements are limited to providing publicly available information about pending proceedings;

 (3) inquiries relating solely to the status of a proceeding, unless the inquiry: (a) states or implies a view as to the merits or outcome of the proceeding; (b) states or implies a preference for a particular party or which states why timing is important to a particular party; (c) indicates a view as to the date by which a proceeding should be resolved; or (d) is otherwise intended to address the merits or outcome or to influence the timing of a proceeding;

 (4) a communication made by or to commission employees that concerns judicial review of a matter that has been decided by the commission and is no longer within the commission's jurisdiction; however, if the matter is remanded to the commission for further action, the provisions of this section shall apply during the period of the remand;

 (5) where circumstances require, ex parte communications for scheduling, administrative purposes, or emergencies that do not deal with substantive matters or issues on the merits are authorized provided:

 (a) the commissioner, hearing officer, or commission employee reasonably believes that no party will gain a procedural or tactical advantage as a result of the ex parte communication; and

 (b) the commissioner, hearing officer, or commission employee makes provision promptly to notify all other parties of the substance of the ex parte communication and, where possible, allows an opportunity to respond;

 (6)(a) subject to the provisions of Chapter 4, Title 30, communications, directly or indirectly, regarding any fact, law, or other matter that is or can reasonably be expected to become an issue in a proceeding for the purposes of an allowable ex parte communication briefing if:

 (i) in the course of such briefing, no commissioner or commission employee shall make any commitment, predetermination, or prediction of any commissioner's action as to any ultimate or penultimate issue or any commission employee's opinion or recommendation as to any ultimate or penultimate issue in any proceeding nor shall any person request any commitment, predetermination, or prediction to be given by any commissioner or commission employee as to any commission action or commission employee opinion or recommendation on any ultimate or penultimate issue;

 (ii) the Executive Director of the Office of Regulatory Staff or his designee must attend the briefing and certify that the commissioners and commission employees complied with the provisions in subitem (i);

 (iii) each commissioner or commission employee present at the allowable ex parte communication briefing grants to every other party or person requesting an allowable ex parte communication briefing on the same or similar matter that is or can reasonably be expected to become an issue in a proceeding, similar access and a reasonable opportunity to communicate, directly or indirectly, regarding any fact, law, or other matter that is or can reasonably be expected to become an issue in a proceeding under the provisions of subsection (D)(6) of this section and files a written, certified statement with the Executive Director of the Office of Regulatory Staff within forty-eight hours of the briefing stating that the commissioner or commission employee will comply with this provision;

 (iv) the commission must post on its website, at least five business days prior to the proposed briefing, a notice of each request for an allowable ex parte communication briefing that includes the date and time of the proposed briefing, the name of the person or party who requested the briefing, the name of each commissioner and commission employee whom the person or party has requested to brief, and the subject matter to be discussed at the briefing;

 (v) the commission must post on its website within three business days after the briefing, all nonconfidential materials and documents provided to the commission as part of the ex parte briefing and a statement signed by the chief clerk of the commission that the provisions of this subsection have been followed, including the justification for actions taken to preserve the confidentiality of any confidential information provided to the commission;

 (vi) the person or party initially seeking the briefing must request the briefing with sufficient notice, as required in subsubitem (iv), to allow the initial briefing to be held at least twenty business days prior to the hearing in the proceeding at which the matter that is the subject of the briefing is or can reasonably be expected to become an issue, and the initial briefing must be held at least twenty business days prior to the hearing in the proceeding; and

 (vii) any person or party desiring to have a briefing on the same or similar matter as provided for in subsubitem (vi) shall be entitled to request a briefing so long as the request is made with sufficient time for notice, as required in subsubitem (iv), to allow the briefing to be held at least ten business days prior to the hearing in the proceeding at which the matter that is the subject of the briefing is or can reasonably be expected to become an issue, and any such briefing must be held at least ten business days prior to the hearing in the proceeding;

 (b) nothing in subsection (D)(6) of this section requires any commissioner or commission employee to grant a request for an allowable ex parte communication briefing, except as provided in subsection (D)(6)(a)(iii) of this section;

 (7) a communication of supplemental legal citation if the party files copies of such documents, without comment or argument, with the chief clerk of the commission and simultaneously provides copies to all parties of record;

 (8) subject to the provisions of Chapter 4, Title 30, communications between and among commissioners regarding matters pending before the commission; provided, further, that any commissioner, hearing officer, or commission employee may receive aid from commission employees if the commission employees providing aid do not:

 (a) receive ex parte communications of a type that the commissioner, hearing officer, or commission employee would be prohibited from receiving; or

 (b) furnish, augment, diminish, or modify the evidence in the record.

 (E) If before serving in a proceeding, a commissioner, hearing officer, or commission employee receives an ex parte communication of a type that may not properly be received while serving, the commissioner, hearing officer, or commission employee must disclose the communication in the following manner: a commissioner, hearing officer, or a commission employee who receives an ex parte communication in violation of this section must promptly after receipt of the communication or, in the case of a communication prior to a filing, as soon as it is known to relate to a filing, place on the record of the matter all written and electronic communications received, all written and electronic responses to the communications, and a memorandum stating the substance of all oral communications received, all responses made, and the identity of each person from whom the commissioner, hearing officer, or commission employee, as appropriate, received an ex parte communication and must advise all parties that these matters have been placed on the record. Within ten days after receipt of notice of the ex parte communication, any party who desires to rebut the contents of the communication must request and shall be granted the opportunity to rebut the contents. Parties affected by a violation may agree to a resolution of any claim regarding such violation, including the waiver of a hearing and the waiver of the obligation to report violations under subsection (J) of this section.

 (F) Any person who makes an inadvertent ex parte communication must, as soon as it is known to relate to an issue in a proceeding, disclose the communication by placing on the record of the matter the communication made, if written or electronic, or a memorandum stating the substance of an inadvertent oral communication, and the identity of each person to whom the inadvertent ex parte communication was made or given. Within ten days after receipt of notice of the ex parte communication, any party who desires to rebut the contents of the communication must request and shall be granted the opportunity to rebut the contents. If no party rebuts the inadvertence of the ex parte communication within ten days after notice of the ex parte communication, the ex parte communication shall be presumed inadvertent. Parties affected by a violation may agree to a resolution of any claim regarding such violation, and the provisions of subsection (K) of this section shall not apply.

 (G) If necessary to eliminate the effect of an ex parte communication received in violation of this section, a commissioner, hearing officer, or commission employee who receives the communication may be disqualified by the commission, and the portions of the record pertaining to the communication may be sealed by protective order.

 (H) Nothing in this section alters or amends Section 1-23-320(i).

 (I) Nothing in this section prevents a commissioner, hearing officer, or commission employee from:

 (1) attending educational seminars sponsored by state, regional, or national organizations and seminars not affiliated with any utility regulated by the commission; however, the provisions of this section shall apply to any communications that take place outside any formal sessions of any seminars or group presentations; or

 (2) conducting a site visit of a utility or Public Service Authority facility under construction or attending educational tours of utility or Public Service Authority plants or other facilities provided:

 (a) the Executive Director of the Office of Regulatory Staff or his designee also attends the site visit or educational tour;

 (b) a summary of the discussion is produced and posted on the commission's website, along with copies of any written materials utilized, referenced, or distributed; and

 (c) each party, person, commission, and commission employee who participated in the site visit or educational tour, within forty-eight hours of the site visit or educational tour, files a certification with the Executive Director of the Office of Regulatory Staff that no commitment, predetermination, or prediction of any commissioner's action as to any ultimate or penultimate issue or any commission employee's opinion or recommendation as to any ultimate or penultimate issue in any proceeding was requested by any person or party, nor any commitment, predetermination, or prediction was given by any commissioner or commission employee as to any commission action or commission employee opinion or recommendation on any ultimate or penultimate issue.

 (J) Subject to any privilege under Rule 501 of the South Carolina Rules of Evidence, any commissioner, hearing officer, commission employee, party, or any other person must report any wilful violation of this section on the part of a commissioner, hearing officer, or commission employee to the review committee.

 (K) Any commissioner, hearing officer, commission employee, or person who wilfully violates the provisions of this section is guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction, must be fined not more than two hundred fifty dollars or imprisoned for not more than six months. If a commissioner wilfully communicates with any party or person or if any person or party wilfully communicates with a commissioner regarding any fact, law, or other matter that is or can reasonably be expected to become an issue in a proceeding less than ten business days prior to the scheduled hearing on the merits, during the hearing or after the hearing but prior to the issuance of a final order, including an order on rehearing, in a proceeding where such facts, law, or other matter is or can reasonably be expected to become an issue, the commissioner shall be removed from office. If a hearing officer or commission employee wilfully communicates with any party or person or any party or person wilfully communicates with a hearing officer or commission employee regarding any fact, law, or other matter that is or can reasonably be expected to become an issue in a proceeding less than ten days prior to the scheduled hearing on the merits, during the hearing or after the hearing but prior to the issuance of a final order, including an order on rehearing, in a proceeding where such facts, law, or other matter is or can reasonably be expected to become an issue, the hearing officer or commission employee shall be terminated from employment by the commission. For purposes of this section: (1) "wilful" means an act done voluntarily and intentionally with the specific intent to do something the law forbids, or with specific intent to fail to do something the law requires to be done, that is to say with bad purpose either to disobey or disregard the law, and (2) a violation of the provisions of this section must be proved by clear and convincing evidence before a commissioner, hearing officer, or commission employee can be removed from office or terminated from employment.

HISTORY: 2004 Act No. 175, § 4, eff January 1, 2005; 2025 Act No. 41 (H.3309), § 22, eff May 12, 2025.

**SECTION 58-3-270. Obtaining remedial relief from violation of prohibited communications; hearing before administrative law judge.**

 (A) Any party seeking remedial relief from alleged violations of Section 58-3-260 may file a complaint with the Administrative Law Court.

 (B) A complaint seeking sanctions must include the following:

 (1) the name and address of the complainant;

 (2) the name and address of complainant's counsel, if any;

 (3) the name and address of each person alleged to have violated the ex parte prohibition, hereinafter referred to as respondent;

 (4) the name and address of each respondent's counsel, if known;

 (5) the facts constituting the alleged violation; and

 (6) the sanctions sought by the complainant.

 (C) A complaint filed under this section must be served on the commission, each respondent, respondent's counsel, if known, and all persons on the commission's service list for the proceeding that is the subject of the ex parte complaint.

 (D) Within seven days of service of the complaint, a respondent must file an answer with the Administrative Law Court and serve it on the complainant, the commission, and all persons on the commission's service list for the proceeding that is the subject of the ex parte complaint.

 (E) The administrative law judge assigned to the ex parte communication complaint proceeding by the administrative law court may issue an order tolling any deadlines imposed by any state statute for a decision by the commission on the proceeding that is the subject of the ex parte communication complaint but only to the extent that the allegations of the complaint are verified and if found to be true would indicate that the proceeding was prejudiced to the extent that the commission is unable to consider the matter in the proceeding impartially. The administrative law judge assigned to the ex parte communication complaint proceeding by the administrative law court must conduct a hearing and must issue a decision within sixty days after the complaint is filed.

 (F) The decision of the administrative law judge must describe the relevant facts of the case and must set forth the judge's findings as to whether the ex parte communication was in violation of Section 58-3-260. The judge also must impose sanctions in accordance with subsection (G) of this section. In imposing these sanctions, the judge, as a matter of equity, must protect: (1) the rights and interests of parties who are not alleged to have violated Section 58-3-260, and (2) the public interest in general.

 (G) In his decision, the administrative law judge may impose the following sanctions:

 (1) dismiss the proceeding if the prohibited ex parte communication has so prejudiced the proceeding that the commission cannot consider the matter impartially;

 (2) issue an adverse ruling on a pending issue that is the subject of the prohibited ex parte communication if other parties are prejudiced by the prohibited ex parte communication;

 (3) strike evidence or pleadings if the evidence or pleadings are tainted by the prohibited ex parte communication;

 (4) issue a public statement of censure or explanation, if it is determined that the prohibited ex parte communication occurred but mitigating circumstances exist that:

 (a) negate the need for a more severe sanction;

 (b) indicate that the proceeding was not prejudiced to the extent that the commission is unable to consider the matter in the proceeding impartially;

 (c) indicate that the ex parte communication did not prejudice other parties; or

 (d) indicate that the ex parte communication did not taint the evidence or pleadings.

 (H) If the administrative law judge finds the complainant's allegation of an ex parte violation was interposed for any improper purpose, such as to harass or cause unnecessary delay or increase the cost of the proceeding, the administrative law judge may issue an appropriate sanction against the complainant.

 (I) Any decision of an administrative law judge pursuant to this section shall be considered interlocutory in nature and is not immediately appealable until a final order of the commission has been issued. Any appeal of a decision of an administrative law judge pursuant to this section must be included in and made in the same manner as an appeal of the final order of the commission in the subject proceeding.

HISTORY: 2004 Act No. 175, § 4, eff January 1, 2005; 2025 Act No. 41 (H.3309), § 23, eff May 12, 2025.

**SECTION 58-3-280. Restriction on employment of former commissioners by public utility.**

 A commissioner must not be employed or retained by a public utility for a period of at least one year following his service as a commissioner. A person who violates this provision is guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction, must be fined not more than five thousand dollars or be imprisoned for not more than one year, or both.

HISTORY: 2004 Act No. 175, § 4, eff February 18, 2004.

Article 3

Law Enforcement Department

**SECTION 58-3-310. Transportation Division Inspectors; commission and removal of inspectors.**

 The law enforcement department of the Office of Regulatory Staff shall consist of such officers, inspectors, and agents as the Executive Director of the Office of Regulatory Staff considers necessary and proper for the enforcement of the Motor Vehicle Carrier Law and other related laws, the enforcement of which is devolved upon the department. The title of such officers, inspectors, and agents shall be "Transportation Division Inspectors". The inspectors shall be commissioned by the Governor upon the recommendation of the Executive Director of the Office of Regulatory Staff. The Executive Director of the Office of Regulatory Staff may remove an inspector if he finds that the inspector is unfit for the position.

HISTORY: 1977 Act No. 90 § 1; 2006 Act No. 318, § 3, eff May 24, 2006.

**SECTION 58-3-320. Bond of inspectors.**

 Each inspector shall execute a bond with a licensed surety company in the amount of not less than ten thousand dollars. The bond shall be filed with the Office of Regulatory Staff and shall be conditioned for the faithful performance of his duties, for the prompt and proper accounting of funds coming into his hands and for the payment of any judgment rendered against him in any court of competent jurisdiction upon a cause of action arising out of breach or abuse of official duty or power and damages sustained by any member of the public from any unlawful act of the inspector. The coverage under the bond shall not include damage to persons or property arising out of the negligent operation of a motor vehicle. The bond may be individual, schedule, or blanket, and shall be approved by the Attorney General. The premiums on the bonds shall be paid by the Office of Regulatory Staff from appropriated funds.

HISTORY: 1977 Act No. 90 § 2; 2006 Act No. 318, § 4, eff May 24, 2006.

**SECTION 58-3-330. Oath of inspectors.**

 Before entering upon the duties of his office, each inspector shall take and subscribe before a notary public, or other officer authorized to administer an oath, an oath to faithfully perform the duties of his office and to properly execute the laws of this State.

HISTORY: 1977 Act No. 90 § 3.

**SECTION 58-3-340. Inspectors to possess and exercise powers and authority of constables.**

 The inspectors shall possess and exercise all of the powers and authority held by constables at common law.

HISTORY: 1977 Act No. 90 § 4.

**SECTION 58-3-350. Enforcement authority of inspectors.**

 When acting in their official capacity, inspectors shall have statewide authority for the enforcement of all motor vehicle carrier laws and related laws.

HISTORY: 1977 Act No. 90 § 5.

**SECTION 58-3-360. Inspectors to insure that violators are prosecuted.**

 Inspectors shall enforce the Motor Vehicle Carrier Law, and related laws and insure that all persons violating any provision of these laws are properly prosecuted.

HISTORY: 1977 Act No. 90 § 6.

**SECTION 58-3-370. Arrest procedure.**

 When any person is apprehended by an inspector upon a charge of violating the Motor Vehicle Carrier Law or related laws, the following procedure shall be followed:

 (1) The person being charged shall be served by the arresting inspector with an official summons and arrest report. The report shall give the appropriate judicial officer jurisdiction to dispose of the case.

 (2) The person being charged may deposit with the arresting inspector a sum of money not to exceed one hundred dollars as bail in lieu of being immediately brought before the magistrate or other judicial officer; provided, that an official summons and arrest report may be issued without requiring any sum of money as bail.

 (3) The official summons and arrest report shall indicate the amount of bail deposited with the inspector and shall serve as a receipt for the sum.

 (4) The arresting inspector shall transmit any sum of money received from the person charged to the appropriate magistrate or other judicial officer.

 (5) Upon receipt of the sum of money, if any is required, as bail, the arresting inspector may release the person charged so that he may appear before the proper judicial officer at a time and place stated in, and required by, the official summons and arrest report.

HISTORY: 1977 Act No. 90 § 7.

Article 5

State Regulation of Public Utilities Review Committee

**SECTION 58-3-510. State Regulation of Public Utilities Review Committee established.**

 There is hereby established a committee to be known as the State Regulation of Public Utilities Review Committee, hereinafter called the review committee, which must exercise the powers and fulfill the duties described in this article.

HISTORY: 2004 Act No. 175, § 5, eff March 4, 2004.

**SECTION 58-3-520. Membership; election of chairman; meetings; nomination of candidates for Public Service Commission and Executive Director of Office of Regulatory Staff.**

 (A) The review committee shall be composed of ten members, three of whom shall be members of the House of Representatives, including the Chairman of the Labor, Commerce and Industry Committee, or his designee, three of whom shall be members of the Senate, including the Chairman of the Judiciary Committee or his designee, two of whom shall be appointed by the Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee from the general public at large, and two of whom appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives from the general public at large. The Speaker of the House of Representatives shall determine how its legislative members shall be selected. The Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee will select the members of the Senate. Provided, however, that in making appointments to the joint committee, race, gender, and other demographic factors should be considered to assure nondiscrimination, inclusion, and representation to the greatest extent possible of all segments of the population of the State. The members of the general public appointed by the Speaker and the Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee must be representative of all citizens of this State and must not be members of the General Assembly.

 (B) The review committee must meet as soon as practicable after appointment and organize itself by electing one of its members as chairman and such other officers as the review committee may consider necessary. Thereafter, the review committee must meet at least annually and at the call of the chairman or by a majority of the members. A quorum consists of six members.

 (C) Unless the review committee finds a candidate qualified and nominates the candidate for a seat on the Public Service Commission or for the Executive Director of the Office of Regulatory Staff, the candidate must not be elected to the Public Service Commission or appointed to serve as Executive Director of the Office of Regulatory Staff.

HISTORY: 2004 Act No. 175, § 5, eff March 4, 2004.

**SECTION 58-3-530. Powers and duties.**

 The review committee has the following powers and duties:

 (1) to nominate:

 (a) no more than three candidates for each seat on the Public Service Commission to be elected by the General Assembly. In order to be nominated, a candidate must be found qualified by meeting the requirements as provided in Sections 58-3-20 and 58-3-560;

 (b) no more than one qualified candidate for the Governor to consider in appointing the Executive Director of the Office of Regulatory Staff. In order to be nominated, a candidate must be found qualified by meeting the minimum requirements as provided in Section 58-4-30. The review committee must give due consideration to a candidate's experience and expertise in matters related to public utilities. A person must not be appointed to serve as Executive Director of the Office of Regulatory Staff unless nominated by the review committee. If the Governor rejects a person nominated for the position of executive director by the review committee, the review committee must nominate another candidate for the Governor to consider, until the Governor makes an appointment;

 (2) notwithstanding any other provision of law, to set the salary of the Executive Director of the Office of Regulatory Staff;

 (3) to conduct an annual performance review of each member of the commission, which must be submitted to the General Assembly. A draft of the member's performance review must be submitted to the member, and the member must be allowed an opportunity to be heard before the review committee before the final draft of the performance review is submitted to the General Assembly. The final performance review must be made a part of the member's record for consideration if the member seeks reelection to the commission;

 (4) to evaluate the actions of the commission, to the end that the members of the General Assembly may better judge whether these actions serve the best interests of the citizens of South Carolina, both individual and corporate;

 (5) to develop and distribute to each party and its representatives appearing before the commission an anonymous and confidential survey evaluating the commissioners. At a minimum, the survey must include the following:

 (a) knowledge and application of substantive utility issues; ability to perceive relevant issues;

 (b) absence of influence by political considerations;

 (c) absence of influence by identities of lawyers;

 (d) absence of influence by identities of litigants;

 (e) courtesy to all persons appearing before the commission; and

 (f) temperament and demeanor in general, preparation for hearings, and attentiveness during hearings;

 (6) to submit to the General Assembly, on an annual basis, the review committee's evaluation of the performance of the commission. A proposed draft of the evaluation must be submitted to the commission prior to submission to the General Assembly, and the commission must be given an opportunity to be heard before the review committee prior to the completion of the evaluation and its submission to the General Assembly;

 (7) to conduct an annual performance review of the Executive Director of the Office of Regulatory Staff, which must be submitted to the General Assembly. A draft of the executive director's performance review must be submitted to the executive director, and the executive director must be allowed an opportunity to be heard before the review committee before the final draft of the performance review is submitted to the General Assembly;

 (8) to submit to the General Assembly, on an annual basis, the review committee's evaluation of the performance of the Office of Regulatory Staff. A proposed draft of the evaluation must be submitted to the Office of Regulatory Staff prior to submission to the General Assembly, and the Office of Regulatory Staff must be given an opportunity to be heard before the review committee prior to the completion of the evaluation and its submission to the General Assembly;

 (9) to assist in developing an annual workshop of at least six contact hours concerning ethics and the Administrative Procedures Act for the commissioners and employees of the Public Service Commission and the Executive Director and employees of the Office of Regulatory Staff;

 (10) to make reports and recommendations to the General Assembly on matters relating to the powers and duties set forth in this section;

 (11) to submit a letter with the annual budget proposals of the Office of Regulatory Staff and the Public Service Commission, indicating the review committee has reviewed and approved the proposals;

 (12) to appoint a committee from the general public at large to advise the review committee on any of its powers and duties. Members must not be members of the General Assembly, members or employees of the Public Service Commission, or the Executive Director or employees of the Office of Regulatory Staff;

 (13) to undertake such additional studies or evaluations as the review committee considers necessary;

 (14) to review candidates for appointment to the South Carolina Public Service Authority Board of Directors as submitted by the Governor to determine whether the candidates meet the qualifications set forth in Section 58-31-20; and

 (15) to submit to the General Assembly, on an annual basis, a review of the state energy action plan of the State Energy Office as required by Section 48-52-430.

 (16) to conduct an annual evaluation of the performance of the Division of Consumer Advocacy within the Department of Consumer Affairs related to the division's representation of consumers in utility matters, which must be submitted to the General Assembly. A proposed draft of the evaluation must be submitted to the Division of Consumer Advocacy prior to submission to the General Assembly, and the Division of Consumer Advocacy must be given an opportunity to be heard before the review committee prior to the completion of the evaluation and its submission to the General Assembly.

HISTORY: 2004 Act No. 175, § 5, eff March 4, 2004; 2005 Act No. 137, § 4, eff May 25, 2005; 2009 Act No. 19, § 6, eff May 19, 2009; 2025 Act No. 41 (H.3309), § 38, eff May 12, 2025.

**SECTION 58-3-540. Expenses.**

 (A) The review committee members are entitled to such mileage, subsistence, and per diem as authorized by law for members of boards, committees, and commissions while in the performance of the duties for which appointed. These expenses shall be paid from the general fund of the State on warrants duly signed by the chairman of the review committee and payable by the authorities from which they are appointed, except as provided in subsection (B) of this section.

 (B) The expenses associated with the review committee's duties to qualify and nominate candidates for the commission and the Executive Director of the Office of Regulatory Staff, to develop and distribute surveys, to develop an annual workshop on ethics and the Administrative Procedures Act, and to undertake studies shall be borne by the public utilities subject to the jurisdiction of the Public Service Commission. On or before the first day of July in each year, the Department of Revenue must assess each public utility its proportion of the expenses in proportion to its gross income from operation in this State in the year ending on the thirtieth day of June preceding that on which the assessment is made which is due and payable on or before July fifteenth. The assessments must be charged against the companies by the Department of Revenue and collected by the department in the manner provided by law for the collection of taxes from the companies including the enforcement and collection provisions of Article 1, Chapter 54 of Title 12 and paid, less the Department of Revenue actual incremental increase in the cost of administration into the state treasury as other taxes collected by the Department of Revenue for the State. The review committee must certify to the Department of Revenue annually on or before May first the amounts to be assessed. The expenses of the review committee shall be advanced by a legislative body and the legislative body incurring such expense shall be reimbursed by the State at such time as the funds have been collected from the corporations liable therefor and, when collected, placed in the state treasury.

HISTORY: 2004 Act No. 175, § 5, eff March 4, 2004.

**SECTION 58-3-550. Staffing; identification of Executive Director candidates.**

 (A) The review committee must use clerical and professional employees of the General Assembly for its staff, who must be made available to the review committee.

 (B) The review committee may employ or retain other professional staff, upon the determination of the necessity for other staff by the review committee.

 (C) The review committee may employ consultants to assist in identifying candidates for the Executive Director of the Office of Regulatory Staff.

 (D) Except as provided in Section 58-3-540(B), the costs and expenses of the review committee must be funded in the annual state General Appropriations Act.

HISTORY: 2004 Act No. 175, § 5, eff March 4, 2004.

**SECTION 58-3-560. Election of commission members; screening and qualification of candidates.**

 (A) Whenever an election is to be held by the General Assembly in joint session to elect a person to serve on the commission, the review committee must conduct its screening pursuant to the provisions of Section 2-20-10, et seq.; however, Section 2-20-40 is not applicable to a screening by the review committee.

 (B) In order to be nominated for a seat on the commission, candidates must meet the requirements of Section 58-3-20 and this section. In screening candidates for the commission and making its findings, the review committee must seek to find the best qualified people by giving due consideration to:

 (1) ability, dedication, compassion, common sense, and integrity of the candidates; and

 (2) the race and gender of the candidates and other demographic factors to assure nondiscrimination to the greatest extent possible of all segments of the population of the State.

HISTORY: 2004 Act No. 175, § 5, eff March 4, 2004.

**SECTION 58-3-570. Study of other state commission structures, responsibilities; report and recommendations.**

 The review committee may conduct a comprehensive study of other states' commissions' structures, responsibilities, qualifications, and compensation. The review committee may prepare and deliver this report along with its recommendations to the General Assembly on or before January 15, 2006.

HISTORY: 2004 Act No. 175, § 5, eff March 4, 2004.

**SECTION 58-3-580. Organization of and allocation of staff to commission or Office of Regulatory Staff.**

 The review committee must allocate personal service positions and other appropriations within the commission to either the commission or the Office of Regulatory Staff. The review committee must organize appropriate divisions within the commission and, as submitted by the executive director, within the Office of Regulatory Staff. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the review committee is authorized to approve position descriptions and compensation schedules for each position within the Office of Regulatory Staff. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the salary of the Executive Director of the Office of Regulatory Staff shall not be construed as limiting the maximum salary that may be paid to other employees of the Office of Regulatory Staff. The review committee's authority to reorganize the agencies and assign personal service positions and other appropriations supersedes any provision of law to the contrary. In effectuating the review committee's assignment of positions between agencies, the Budget and Control Board is directed to assign through transfer both the position and the appropriation for the position. Notwithstanding this section or any other provision of law, the Executive Director of the Office of Regulatory Staff has sole authority to select and employ personnel of the Office of Regulatory Staff. On and after June 30, 2004, a commission employee whose position is transferred to the Office of Regulatory Staff is, upon application to the executive director, entitled only to due consideration for the position.

HISTORY: 2004 Act No. 175, § 5, eff March 4, 2004; 2005 Act No. 5, § 5, eff December 3, 2004.