

**Before the
Consumer Protection and Professional Licensure Committee
Senate of Pennsylvania**

**Statement of Robert F. Powelson
Nominee to the Pennsylvania Public Utilities Commission**

June 27, 2008

Good morning Chairman Tomlinson, Chair Boscola, and members of the Committee. Let me begin this afternoon by thanking the Committee for taking the time out of your hectic schedules to meet with me and my fellow nominee Wayne Gardner for this important confirmation hearing.

Before I begin my comments this morning, I would like to thank Governor Rendell, Majority Leader Pileggi and Senate Pro Temp Scarnati for their steadfast support of my nomination to serve on the PUC.

As a long standing resident of the Commonwealth, I am truly honored to be here today to share with you my qualifications and ask for your favorable consideration of my nomination.

I recognize that within the midst of the budget debate there are many moving parts to the process. However, I stand here today to tell you that I am ready, willing and able to serve on this commission with distinction.

Second, I wish to share with you that my family is with me here today to participate in the hearing process. My wife Lauren of 10 years along with oldest son Ryan (6) are participating as members of the process. My youngest son Shane (2) is not here today and that is good news for this Committee as he has brought new meaning to the phrase "Terrible Two's".

Needless to say, they are neophytes to the political process but recognize the importance of these hearings so I thank them for being with me here this morning. I also want to thank my father Bob Powelson who has served with distinction in the federal government as a GS-15 working at ASO in Northeast Philadelphia.

In the interest of brevity, I want to make it clear to you that I possess the character, drive and ability to be an effective Public Utility Commissioner. As a longstanding resident of Delaware County, I attended St. Joseph's University and earned a Masters Degree from the University of Pennsylvania where I received the prestigious *Leadership for Results honor in 2004*. My political mentor and dear friend was former State Senator Bob Thompson. Bob was a person of the highest caliber and someone who cared very deeply about the Commonwealth. I also received a tremendous amount of political mentorship from former Speaker of the House Matt Ryan.

Both men typify what it means to be dedicated public servants and always put party label aside to do the right thing for the Commonwealth.

I recognize that today's hearing is about my record and my ability to serve on this prestigious commission.

So, let me start off by saying I'm an advocate of the free market system. In my view, markets work when we allow capital investment to flow into the marketplace. The competitive marketplace system is what drives the PA economy.

Economics 101 teaches us that the competitive market system is a mechanism both for communicating decisions of consumers, producers, and resource suppliers to one another and for synchronizing those decisions toward consistent production objectives.

One might ask: has this system failed us in the telecom, rail, electric utilities arena? Hardly!

Pennsylvania has been a role model state for deregulation. In fact, our PUC is nationally recognized by the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissions for its efforts on a number of regulatory issues involving water, telecom, and electric.

In this day and age—Public Utility Commissioners must be versed on both public policy and the marketplace realities. That is why I plan to hit the ground running with a very ambitious education program on electric deregulation.

As I have learned from my 270 day journey, Pennsylvania ratepayers both business and residential alike want reliability and consistency in their pricing model. It is critically important that the PUC have effective oversight over the utility industry to guard the consumer from exploitation.

My objective as a PUC Commissioner is to be fair and balanced. I recognize that consumer protection is a very important aspect of my role as a Commissioner. Therefore, I submit to you that as a Commissioner I will support measures to educate consumers on the conditions of the current marketplace.

Let me conclude by saying the PUC must be cognizant of the laws passed by the General Assembly and signed by the Governor.

Therefore, we have a responsibility to implement policy and balance the perspectives of residential and business ratepayers alike.

In my humble view, the PUC has a tremendous role to play in the economic future of the Commonwealth. If we provide a clear and concise regulatory climate, firms will invest in our state.

Finally, let me add that the Commission has made great strides in educating consumers to assist them in exercising their power choice, and in using technology to disseminate information. These efforts must continue.

On behalf of my family and supporters, I thank you for allowing this opportunity to appear before you this morning and welcome your questions.