

476.10 Investigations expense appropriation.

In order to carry out the duties imposed upon it by law, the board may, at its discretion, allocate and charge directly the expenses attributable to its duties to the person bringing a proceeding before the board or to persons participating in matters before the board. The board shall ascertain the certified expenses incurred and directly chargeable by the consumer advocate division of the department of justice in the performance of its duties. The board and the consumer advocate separately may decide not to charge expenses to persons who, without expanding the scope of the proceeding or matter, intervene in good faith in a board proceeding initiated by a person subject to the board's jurisdiction, the consumer advocate, or the board on its own motion. For assessments in any proceedings or matters before the board, the board and the consumer advocate separately may consider the financial resources of the person, the impact of assessment on participation by intervenors, the nature of the proceeding or matter, and the contribution of a person's participation to the public interest. The board may present a bill for expenses under this paragraph to the person, either at the conclusion of a proceeding or matter, or from time to time during its progress. Presentation of a bill for expenses under this paragraph constitutes notice of direct assessment and request for payment in accordance with this section.

The board shall ascertain the total of the division's expenses incurred during each fiscal year in the performance of its duties under law. The board shall add to the total of the division's expenses the certified expenses of the consumer advocate as provided under section 475A.6. The board shall deduct all amounts charged directly to any person from the total expenses of the board and the consumer advocate. The board may assess the amount remaining after the deduction to all persons providing service over which the board has jurisdiction in proportion to the respective gross operating revenues of such persons from intrastate operations during the last calendar year over which the board has jurisdiction. For purposes of determining gross operating revenues under this section, the board shall not include gross receipts received by a cooperative corporation or association for wholesale transactions with members of the cooperative corporation or association, provided that the members are subject to assessment by the board based upon the members' gross operating revenues, or provided that such a member is an association whose members are subject to assessment by the board based upon the members' gross operating revenues. If any portion of the remainder can be identified with a specific type of utility service, the board shall assess those expenses only to the entities providing that type of service over which the board has jurisdiction. The board may make the remainder assessments under this paragraph on a quarterly basis, based upon estimates of the expenditures for the fiscal year for the utilities division and the consumer advocate. Not more than ninety days following the close of the fiscal year, the utilities division shall conform the amount of the prior fiscal year's assessments to the requirements of this paragraph. For gas and electric public utilities exempted from rate regulation pursuant to this chapter, the remainder assessments under this paragraph shall be computed at one-half the rate used in computing the assessment for other persons.

A person subject to a charge or assessment shall pay the division the amount charged or assessed against the person within thirty days from the time the division provides notice to the person of the amount due, unless the person files an objection in writing with the board setting out the grounds upon which the person claims that such charge or assessment is excessive, unreasonable, erroneous, unlawful, or invalid. Upon receipt of an objection, the board shall set the matter for hearing and issue its order in accordance with its findings in the proceeding.

The order shall be subject to review in the manner provided in this chapter. All amounts collected by the division pursuant to the provisions of this section shall be deposited with the treasurer of state and credited to the general fund of the state. Such amounts shall be spent in accordance with the provisions of chapter 8.

Whenever the board shall deem it necessary in order to carry out the duties imposed upon it in connection with rate regulation under section 476.6, investigations under section 476.3, or review proceedings under section 476.31, the board may employ additional temporary or permanent staff, or may contract with persons who are not state employees for engineering, accounting, or other professional services, or both. The costs of

these additional employees and contract services shall be paid by the public utility whose rates are being reviewed in the same manner as other expenses are paid under this section. Beginning on July 1, 1991, there is appropriated out of any funds in the state treasury not otherwise appropriated, such sums as may be necessary to enable the board to hire additional staff and contract for services under this section. The board shall increase quarterly assessments specified in unnumbered paragraph 2, by amounts necessary to enable the board to hire additional staff and contract for services under this section. The authority to hire additional temporary or permanent staff that is granted to the board by this section shall not be subject to limitation by any administrative or executive order or decision that restricts the number of state employees or the filling of employee vacancies, and shall not be subject to limitation by any law of this state that restricts the number of state employees or the filling of employee vacancies unless that law is made applicable to this section by express reference to this section. Before the board expends or encumbers an amount in excess of the funds budgeted for rate regulation and before the board increases quarterly assessments pursuant to this paragraph, the director of the department of management shall approve the expenditure or encumbrance. Before approval is given, the director of the department of management shall determine that the expenses exceed the funds budgeted by the general assembly to the board for rate regulation and that the board does not have other funds from which the expenses can be paid. Upon approval of the director of the department of management the board may expend and encumber funds for the excess expenses, and increase quarterly assessments to raise the additional funds. The board and the office of consumer advocate may add additional personnel or contract for additional assistance to review and evaluate energy efficiency plans and the implementation of energy efficiency programs including, but not limited to, professionally trained engineers, accountants, attorneys, skilled examiners and inspectors, and secretaries and clerks. The board and the office of consumer advocate may also contract for additional assistance in the evaluation and implementation of issues relating to telecommunication competition. The board and the office of the consumer advocate may expend additional sums beyond those sums appropriated. However, the authority to add additional personnel or contract for additional assistance must first be approved by the department of management. The additional sums for energy efficiency shall be provided to the board and the office of the consumer advocate by the utilities subject to the energy efficiency requirements in this chapter. Telephone companies shall pay any additional sums needed for assistance with telecommunication competition issues. The assessments shall be in addition to and separate from the quarterly assessment.

Fees paid to the utilities division shall be deposited in the general fund of the state. These funds shall be used for the payment, upon appropriation by the general assembly, of the expenses of the utilities division and the consumer advocate division of the department of justice. Subject to this section, the utilities division or the consumer advocate division may keep on hand with the treasurer of state funds in excess of the current needs of the utilities division or the consumer advocate division.

The administrator and consumer advocate shall account for receipts and disbursements according to the separate duties imposed upon the utilities and consumer advocate divisions by the laws of this state and each separate duty shall be fiscally self-sustaining.

All fees and other moneys collected under this section and sections 478.4, 479.16, and 479A.9 shall be deposited into the general fund of the state and expenses required to be paid under this section shall be paid from funds appropriated for those purposes. Moneys deposited into the general fund of the state pursuant to this section and sections 478.4, 479.16, and 479A.9 shall be subject to the requirements of section 8.60.

[C66, 71, 73, 75, § 490A.10; C77, 79, 81, § 476.10; 81 Acts, ch 156, § 7, ch 158, § 1]

83 Acts, ch 127, § 28; 86 Acts, ch 1246, § 613, 614; 89 Acts, ch 103, § 1; 89 Acts, ch 296, § 72; 89 Acts, ch 321, § 30; 90 Acts, ch 1247, §11; 90 Acts, ch 1252, §29; 91 Acts, ch 260, § 1236, 1237; 93 Acts, ch 131, §20, 21; 94 Acts, ch 1107, §80; 95 Acts, ch 199, § 3; 2001 Acts, ch 9, §1, 3