



# Consumer Connection NEWSLETTER

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June 2024

**FPSC  
Chairman  
Introduces  
Quarterly  
Newsletter**



FROM THE DESK OF:

*Chairman*  
**Mike La Rosa**

On November 9, 2023, Commissioner Mike La Rosa's fellow Florida Public Service Commissioners elected him to serve as the Commission's Chairman for a two-year term beginning January 2, 2024. With the start of his term, the Chairman introduced his new quarterly newsletter *From the Desk of Chairman Mike La Rosa*.

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**CONSUMER INFORMATION VIDEO**

## TAKE YOUR CHILD TO WORK DAY AT THE COMMISSION

Thursday, April 25, was Take Your Child to Work Day. The Commission's Office of Consumer Assistance & Outreach hosted the children of the PSC for a fun-filled day of utility-centered activities. Chairman Mike La Rosa welcomed the children with an interactive demonstration of a Commission hearing, allowing participants to fill the roles of Commissioner, PSC staff, and interested parties. This year's activities focused on water, electric, and waste conservation tips (how to conserve and why it matters). See a message from the children of the PSC on Take Your Child to Work Day 2024.

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## Chairman Mike La Rosa Introduces Quarterly Newsletter

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### **Chairman La Rosa's vision and priorities for his term include:**

Reaching the next generation to bring and build career awareness—be it in government or the broader energy sector. The up-and-coming workforce can bring new ideas, processes, and skills that are needed to move us forward. It is important to me to be intentional in reaching young people who may not know how rewarding this work is.

Looking for ways to increase accountability and credibility with customers, by leveraging new technologies to become as transparent as possible. I want to aide customers in understanding the regulatory process, find creative ways to reach Florida customers and help them to participate in a meaningful way.

Enhancing economic development in Florida. Improving reliability and approving reasonable rates are just a few areas where the PSC can help align the priorities of the state with our utility providers. Be it natural gas infrastructure; clean, safe drinking water; or new utility services that weren't previously available – all of our regulated industries play a part in creating a friendly environment to attract new business and expand opportunities to improve the quality of life for all Floridians.

Providing the public with a transparent quarterly update on the Commission's work, Chairman La Rosa's *From the Desk of* newsletter will help customer better understand the PSC's regulatory role. The Chairman's newsletter will give the public information on the Commission's current dockets, scheduled meetings and hearings, and Commission initiatives.

The first edition of the newsletter was issued in [March 2024](#), and the second edition was issued in [June 2024](#). You can find future *From the Desk of Chairman Mike La Rosa* newsletters on the [PSC's website](#) under the Hot Topics section. New issues of the newsletter will be distributed quarterly, in March, June, September, and December.





## BRIEFS

### Chairman Mike La Rosa Participates at EPRI

The Electric Power Research Institute (EPRI) hosted a tour of its research facility in Charlotte, North Carolina in May. Chairman La Rosa joined colleagues from seven state Commissions to learn about state-of-the-art research and development on electric generation, distribution, and transmission. EPRI also shared information on its cyber, digital, and instrumentation lab, including an experimental waterless solar panel cleaning system developed by a student-led team!

One of the most interesting areas of research is the use of advanced conductors in transmission lines (see photo). “We see transmission lines every day,” Chairman La Rosa said, “but don’t always hear about the upgrades that are being made to improve their performance. It was exciting to see how this technology might be used in Florida.” Advanced conductors, like carbon conductors, can improve grid efficiency, increase current carrying capacity, improve reliability, and add to the resilience of transmission lines. “This research is important for Florida’s grid, as building a new transmission line is often very difficult, and upgrading existing transmission lines can be a viable option.”



### Chairman La Rosa attends Southeastern Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners

Chairman La Rosa attended the Southeastern Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (SEARUC) Annual Meeting in June. Topics ranged from navigating load growth, resiliency, and affordability to preparing for the new PFAS water rules to what’s next for new nuclear. With the membership of eleven southeastern states and Puerto Rico, Commissions concentrate on information that best fits this geographic and demographic area. Also at the SEARUC meeting, Chairman La Rosa along with his fellow Commissioners, recommended Commissioner Gabriella Passidomo to represent Florida on the Executive Committee, bringing the annual SEARUC meeting to Florida in 2027.

### Chairman La Rosa Tours Lakeland Electric Plant

On the Home front, Chairman La Rosa toured Lakeland Electric’s plant facilities in May. Lakeland Electric is the third largest publicly owned utility in Florida and recently assisted the City of Tallahassee in its restoration efforts after three tornadoes struck on May 10. The visit to Lakeland included two main areas of focus, a tour of their new 120 MW Reciprocating Internal Combustion Engine (RICE) plant on a brownfield site and a roundtable with local leaders on physical and cyber security measures at the utility.

Chairman La Rosa toured the inside of the new natural gas generation facility which replaced a retired coal plant and learned about the quick-start capabilities that make this plant perfect for meeting customer-demand at times solar-generation is not available. Plant engineers and operators walked through the process of redesigning, permitting, and the decision-making that went into determining why the RICE generators were a best fit for Lakeland Electric (see photo).

The second portion of the day was spent with Lakeland Executives, including the head of physical infrastructure security, and Florida House Representatives Jennifer Canady, Josie Tomkow and Brad Yaeger. This past legislative session Representative Canady, a Lakeland native, sponsored a bill that provided criminal penalties and liability for causing damage to critical infrastructure. Chairman La Rosa was able to hear firsthand from the legislators the priority they are placing on creating a secure and reliable Florida Grid. In turn, Chairman La Rosa provided insight into the Commission’s upcoming assessment of the security and resiliency of the state’s electric grid and natural gas facilities against both physical and cyber threats. Given that the Commission is an arm of the Legislative branch, it is important to Chairman La Rosa that we continue to offer expert consultation provide an understanding on Florida’s unique energy landscape.



### Take Your Child to Work Day—Reaching the Next Generation

One of Chairman La Rosa’s priorities is to reach the next generation by building career awareness. Take Your Child to Work Day, held nationally on the fourth Thursday in April, provided a perfect opportunity to help the children of FPSC employees better understand their parents’ work and generate interest to follow in their career path. The Chairman held a mock hearing, allowing participants to act the parts of Chairman, interested party, and PSC staff. In addition to being a lot of fun, the children learned the value of the Commission’s hearing process and their parents’ contributions to its success.





## TECO & DEF Service Hearings in June

*In June, the Florida Public Service Commission (PSC) held seven virtual and in-person service hearings to hear feedback from customers of Tampa Electric Company (TECO) and Duke Energy Florida, LLC (DEF) on each utility company's quality of service and rate increase requests.*

*In April, TECO and DEF filed petitions with the PSC for rate increases. DEF supplies electric service to approximately two million retail customers in Pinellas, Pasco, Orange, Osceola, and Seminole Counties. TECO provides electric service to approximately 844,000 customers in Hillsborough and portions of Polk, Pasco, and Pinellas counties.*

### What is a customer service hearing? Does my input do any good or make a difference?

Customer service hearings are one important step in the overall ratemaking process for the Commission. When considering a utility's rate increase request, service hearings allow customers to provide their ideas and opinions about issues raised in the case directly to PSC Commissioners. Specifically, customers of the utility company requesting the rate increase can comment on the request and the company's quality of service. When you testify in front of the Commission, your input becomes part of the official record for future hearings regarding the rate request. See the ten steps of the typical ratemaking process.

### 10 Steps of the Typical Ratemaking Process:

1. The ratemaking process begins when a utility files a request for a rate increase with the PSC.
2. The utility will notify customers of its request for a rate increase through a bill insert.
3. Once an application has been filed with the Commission, PSC staff gathers information for the case.
  - ◆ PSC staff audits the utility's records, examines the utility's information and proposals, and develops additional information and alternative proposals.
  - ◆ Staff also conducts infrastructure inspections, reviews plant and financial records, and assesses consumer service quality.
  - ◆ Simultaneously, while PSC staff investigates the facts and issues outlined in the utility's application, parties to the case file intervention petitions, begin the evidentiary process, and typically hire experts to prepare testimony.
4. The PSC issues notice to inform residents and the public in the utility's service area about the rate increase request and the case schedule, including when service hearings will be held.
5. The Commission holds customer service hearings to hear feedback from the utility's customers.
6. The PSC holds a prehearing conference to identify the issues, identify interested parties, and set a schedule for the case.
7. Technical hearings are attended by Commissioners, PSC staff, utility staff, the Public Counsel, and interested parties. The company and interested parties provide testimony and question witnesses about their recommendations on issues in the case.
  - ◆ The utility application, the technical hearing, and service hearing testimony and exhibits become part of the case record Commissioners use to make decisions about the case.
8. PSC staff reviews and analyzes the entire record and files a recommendation with the PSC's Office of Commission Clerk detailing the staff's adjustments to the company's petition.
9. The Commission reviews the information from the record and the staff's recommendation to decide on the utility's rate request.
  - ◆ The decision is announced in an open meeting followed by a written "order."
  - ◆ After the Commission's order is issued, any party may ask the Commission to reconsider its decision on the issues. After the reconsideration, the Public Counsel, the utility, or any other party involved in the proceeding may appeal the Commission's decision to the Florida Supreme Court.
10. Once the PSC issues its order, the utility must notify customers of the order and new rates in their area.
  - ◆ The utility's notice of the order and revised rates must be approved by the Commission first and sent to customers with the first bill containing the new rates.

### Customers wanting to speak before the Commission at future customer service hearings may do so by:

- ◆ using the online registration form, which will be available on the [PSC's website](#) under the Hot Topics;
- ◆ calling the PSC at 1-850-413-7080;
- ◆ emailing the PSC at [speakersignup@psc.state.fl.us](mailto:speakersignup@psc.state.fl.us) ;
- ◆ registering at the venue.

**The Florida Public Service Commission wants to hear from you!  
We encourage your participation in these proceedings  
to help Commissioners reach their decisions.**