



2017
Annual Report

**Consumers
Council of
Missouri**

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of Missouri

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History of CCM

Alberta Slavin founded the consumer movement in Missouri more than 40 years ago. She and a group of women noticed that the same groceries sold in the same grocery chains had different prices in North St. Louis than they did in more affluent parts of the St. Louis area. The result was HELP, Housewives Elect Lower Prices which crowd sourced pricing data and publicized their work. This effort resulted in pricing parity and attracted national media attention.

Following that success, Alberta took on the utility companies. The phone company, Ma Bell, cut off her phone service after she attached a privately purchased phone to a jack. The phone company argued outside equipment would harm the telephone network, and damage their equipment. Alberta fought that notion and won. This victory sparked the founding of the Utility Consumers Council of MO (UCCM).

As the leader of UCCM, Alberta became the go-to person for consumer issues in Missouri. She was appointed by Gov. Teasdale as the first consumer advocate to head the Missouri Public Service Commission and later became the “On Your Side” consumer reporter for CBS, Channel 4.

The organization experienced some dormancy but in 2006 Alberta, Joyce Armstrong, Joan Bray, John Coffman, Wayne Goode, Tracy McCreery, and many others rejuvenated the Utility Council and renamed it the Consumers Council of Missouri so it could take on more consumers issues.

Consumers Council of Missouri was founded on the belief that ordinary citizens bannng together could make a difference.
We are carrying on that vision.

2017 Annual Meeting / Board Summary

Consumers Council of Missouri is holding its annual meeting on Monday, December 4, 2017 at SEIU: 5585 Pershing, St. Louis MO 63112.

The board lost two members this year: Ray Hartmann and Mary Still. Both Ray and Mary remain supporters of CCM and both cited time commitment as the reason for resignation.

The board welcomed two new members this year: Adam Kustra and Tracy Verner. Both Adam and Tracy come to CCM with a social justice background. Adam brings community organizing experience and Tracy brings banking justice experience.

There is only one board member up for reelection: Renee Marver.

Consumers Council of Missouri continues to focus on three main areas of consumer advocacy: health care, personal finance and utilities. A summary of each aspect of our work follows.

Personal Finance

SLEHCRA. Over the past five years, Consumers Council of Missouri has been a collaborative member of the St. Louis Equal Housing and Community Reinvestment Alliance (SLEHCRA). Over the past year, CCM with other SLEHCRA partners, successfully negotiated two public Community Benefits Agreements which committed hundreds of millions of dollars to low-and moderate income and minority communities throughout the region. Through these agreements, more than \$250 million has been committed in mortgage loans to low-to-moderate income communities and minority borrowers, more than \$160,000 in targeted marketing to low-income and high minority individuals and neighborhoods, more than \$150,000 for financial education, and \$600,000 in charitable giving to area non-profits.

STRUT. Consumers Council continues as a community partner member of the St. Louis Regional Unbanked Task Force,(STRUT). Since launching its Bank On Save Up initiative, financial education has been provided through partners and more than 15,000 new bank accounts have been opened by unbanked or underbanked consumers. The collective impact on our community is over 17 million dollars.

PAYDAY LENDING: Consumers Council helped oversee the nation's first required list of alternatives to payday lenders required to be distributed by payday lenders. This list highlights regional partners who work to provide non-predatory banking products to families who need access to small amounts of capital.

Consumer's Council of Missouri is committed to the continued work with SLEHCRA and STRUT, to building partnerships with financial institutions in the region to bring progressive and innovative solutions for investing in low-and-moderate income communities.

Health Care Access

CCM's work focused on continued our independent rate review of health insurance policies available on the Missouri insurance exchange. Missouri was the last state in the country to require health insurance companies file proposed rates to be reviewed by the Missouri Department of Insurance. In the absence of formal rate review, for the last 2 years CCM has worked under a contract with the Missouri Foundation for Health to perform rate review with a team led by the former Director of Insurance for the State of Missouri and including Health Law Students from St. Louis University.

As the Department embarked upon its inaugural year of rate review, CCM continued working under the guidance of Jay Angoff and hired a rate review team including St. Louis Law students James Callahan, David Bird and practicing lawyer Britta Thornton. The team started by reviewing new ACA rules, focusing on the Market Stabilization Rule and anticipated reductions in costs to consumers.

Following the passage of this law in 2016, the Department of Insurance issued its first Rate Review Rule earlier this year. CCM was able to use our previous work to provide comprehensive comment on this rule, strongly advocating for more transparency and public involvement. Our team constructed a conclusive legal argument for requiring insurance companies to fully disclose their rate justifications.

Missourians on the exchange will see an average increase of around 35% on their premiums, and some as high as 76%. Our legal team concluded decisively that these rates were unreasonable and submitted and issued our report card to the Department as well as the general public.

CCM remains committed to improving transparency in the increasing costs of health insurance to Missourians.

Utility Work

Consumers Council continued its work towards affordable utility bills this year, with formal interventions in Public Service Commission rate cases for all of major energy providers in Missouri. Our work contributed to shaving a 7.8% request from Ameren Missouri to a 4% increase, and reached an agreement to increase the fixed customer charge from \$8 to \$9, as opposed to the proposed \$12.89. Kansas City Power & Light has a similar request for 7.5% that was also reduced to approximately 5%; in that case, Consumers Council also won a legal argument to prevent captive electric consumers from being forced to subsidize competitive electric car charging stations.

In the current Spire natural gas rate cases, Consumers Council is currently fighting a rate increase request, and arguing for a rate *decrease* for both the Laclede Gas Company and Missouri Gas Energy areas. In those cases, we are proposing a low income program to address unmet needs.

Consumers Council was part of a successful coalition to challenge Great Plains Energy, the owner of Kansas City Power & Light, when they did not properly file for merger approval for their attempt to acquire Westar electric company. We have also intervened in the most recent water rate request from Missouri-American Water Company, and are participating in a lead pipe replacement case.

In the state legislature, Consumers Council helped stop multiple attempts to weaken consumer protections from the electric, natural gas, and water industries. We will remain vigilant as next year's legislative session is likely to see many of the same threats to affordable utility rates.

2017 Annual Event and Awards

Our annual event this year was held at The Den, 711 N. 13th Street 63103. This year we drew in over 75 guests and raised well over \$10,000. We offered two awards this year in recognition of consumer activism, our Alberta Slavin Award and our first ever, Volunteer of the Year Award.

2017 Alberta Slavin Award: James Owen

James Owen was appointed by Governor Jay Nixon head the Missouri Office of Public Counsel, whose office represents consumers in utility rates cases. In his capacity as Missouri's Public Counsel, Owen took a strong stance supporting consumers and embarked upon a public engagement campaign, working with Consumers Council and AARP to educate consumers on the process of utility regulation. His last public action was to oppose a rule proposed (and later adopted) by the Public Service Commission which allows for regulators to meet in private with utility representatives, standing in favor of public disclosure and transparency in the regulatory process. Owen was dismissed by Governor Greitens shortly after voicing his strong opposition to the weakening of disclosure rules and has since taken the head position at Renew Missouri.

2017 Volunteer of the Year Award: Fran Bonham

Fran Bonham was awarded CCM's first Volunteer of the Year award in recognition of her service standing up for consumers as well as her dedication and assistance to CCM in accomplishing our mission. Fran has been a CCM volunteer for many years and in such capacity often helps in fundraising events, the first to arrive and the last to leave. But her passion and dedication to consumer issues is most prominent in her action at the mic at the Public Service Commission. Thank you to Fran for your unwavering work standing up for consumers.

Thank you so much for being a supporter.


We are all consumers. When utility rates go up, it affects our collective bottom line and hurts lowest income residents among us the hardest. When our state's health insurance rates go up, more Missourians go uninsured. And when banking practices fail, our state's economy suffers.

Consumers Council of Missouri stands up for Missouri families when monopoly utility companies propose increased rates. This year, we facilitated hundreds of public comments, filed expert testimony, intervened in cases across the state and lobbied on behalf of residential consumers in the Capitol.

When Missouri health insurance companies filed to raise rates ~35% this year, Consumers Council's legal team formally reviewed the increases, provided valuable comment to the Department of Insurance and testified in several hearings arguing for increased transparency in our state's regulatory processes.

Consumers Council of Missouri is standing with and standing up for the every day consumer in our state. Thank you for supporting our continued work in 2018.

We would love to have your support.



Cara Spencer
Executive Director
Consumers Council of Missouri