

August 19, 2020



**FROM THE DESK OF
COMMISSIONER
BRENT BAILEY
CENTRAL DISTRICT OFFICE**



The Central District is pleased to bring you the latest information concerning utility rates, project developments, Public Service Commission actions and other news you can use. I hope you will find this information to be a useful resource to learn about the Public Service Commission, consumer issues and the continuous work we are doing for the citizens in the Central District and across the state of Mississippi. Thank you again for allowing me to serve you in this capacity.

Brent Bailey

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Zap the Gap Strives to Improve and Expand Utility Coverage

A little over 10 years ago, a new multi-state program was introduced by the Mississippi Public Service Commission. Originally, the program's goal was to identify areas in Mississippi with limited or no cellular phone service coverage. The program was called "[Zap the Gap](#)." Residents would report areas that lack adequate cellphone coverage and the information would be forwarded to wireless providers to help bring attention to unserved or underserved areas. Since then, the program has expanded to include internet service, natural gas service and water service.

Although we have seen a significant reduction in landline service across the state, many areas of Mississippi still lack sufficient wireless coverage to send and receive calls, much less transmit photos, videos and other data. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact on schools, work sites, entertainment, places of worship, travel and more has underscored the fact that a large number of Mississippians don't have access to reliable, affordable broadband internet service.

In addition, because many consumers want a choice of an in-home energy source, there has been an increase in requests for access to natural gas service. And, unfortunately, we still find places in Mississippi that lack access to reliable, potable water.

The Mississippi Public Service Commission wants to hear from you should you lack access to any of these crucial services. Please take a few moments to complete any of the following consumer surveys:

[Cell Phone Service Survey](#)

[Broadband Internet Survey](#)

[Natural Gas Survey](#)

[Water Service Survey](#)

The purpose of the surveys is to determine those areas of Mississippi which do not have cellular coverage, broadband internet service, natural gas service, or water service. Please only complete one survey per household or business per utility service type. Please note that completing a survey does not guarantee utility service additions will occur. The Commission collects the survey information into a data base and shares the information with the proper corresponding public utilities. Utilities plot the locations of survey participants to review the commonality with certificated areas and ascertain concentrations of demand. Areas are then assessed for possible extension or buildout of facilities.

Expanding access to the utility services listed above not only improves customer convenience and increases one's quality of life, it is also vital for economic development – especially in rural areas of Mississippi. Utilize the Zap the Gap survey tool to help us help service providers identify those areas where investments are needed most.



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LAST WEEK *at the* MPSC

- ✎ The Commission **Ordered** that Pattern Energy Group 2 LP, the Sierra Club, Southern Alliance for Clean Energy, Bigger Pie Forum LLC, Advanced Energy Management Alliance, and Southern Renewable Energy Association motions to intervene be granted in Mississippi Power Co.'s Integrated Resource Planning process.
- ✎ The Commission **Ordered** that Pattern Energy Group 2 LP, Flora Real Estate & Development LLC, Southern Alliance for Clean Energy, Bigger Pie Forum LLC, Advanced Energy Management Alliance, and Southern Renewable Energy Association motions to intervene be granted in Entergy Mississippi's Integrated Resource Planning process.
- ✎ Atmos Energy filed a **Request to Adjust its Meter Testing Standard** in response to the coronavirus. The meter testing program requires an interruption of natural gas service while meters are pulled and tested. Atmos proposed to postpone the testing program until the risks associated with the coronavirus and customer interactions are mitigated. The Commission granted an **Order** to postpone the meter testing activity and will revisit the matter in May 2021.
- ✎ Atmos Energy filed its **Monthly Report on Meter Estimations**. To protect the safety of employees and consumers at the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Atmos temporarily suspended meter reading and used meter estimation for customers without wireless meter technology. Manual meter reading is now back to pre-COVID-19 activity.
- ✎ Atmos Energy filed a **Construction Notice** outlining its **system integrity improvement project** to replace obsolete steel mains and service piping with 11,112 feet of HDPE, 157 services, and a regulator station on multiple streets in West Jackson. Total project costs are estimated at \$1.95 million.
- ✎ The City of Brandon **confirmed** that it no longer has any utility customers located at or more than one mile outside of its corporate limits upon the recent completion of the annexation of properties along the city's southern boundaries.
- ✎ The Commission issued an **Order** granting Centurylink Public Communications, Inc.'s Petition for Discontinuation of Service. The company is exiting the business of providing services at correctional facilities in Mississippi.



Last week, our Consumer Complaint Specialists handled a total of **25** complaints in the Central District.

Electric Companies	10
Telecommunications	10
Water/Sewage	4
Natural Gas	1

Last week, the Central District received a total of **168** complaints from consumers against potential telemarketers through our No Call app, website and mail-ins. The top three general issues reported by consumers are related to financial loans/consolidate debt, health products/prescription drugs, and insurance.

We encourage consumers to file telemarketing complaints with the Federal Trade Commission at <http://www.donotcall.gov/> in addition to filing complaints with the Mississippi Public Service Commission.