



ARIZONA CORPORATION COMMISSION

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Commission Creates Ombudsman's Office to Assist Small Water Companies

(Phoenix) The Arizona Corporation Commission is proud to announce Utilities Division Assistant Director Elijah Abinah has been named "Ombudsman" of the newly formed "Small Water Company Ombudsman Office."

The creation of the office comes from the June Open Meeting when the Commission adopted new policies to ensure safe and reliable water service to customers statewide. The office will offer more points of contact for water companies, especially those that are struggling financially or operationally as is the case with many small rural utilities.

"Elijah will be a strong leader in this role and will serve as a valuable asset for the Commission, the utilities, and the public in finding solutions to difficult water problems," said Chairman Doug Little. "The struggling water companies need to have some assistance to be able to provide safe reliable water services."

The Residential Utility Consumer Office (RUCO) and Arizonans for Responsible Water Policy supported the creation of such an office to help small water company owners better understand interpreting and navigating Commission proceedings. The Ombudsman will also help communication with customers and helping them find answers and solutions to problems they may encounter.

"Naming Elijah to this important position is a huge step forward in implementing the policies we adopted a little over a month ago," said Commissioner Andy Tobin. "In my travels around Arizona, I have seen the struggles of small water companies first hand, which is why I proposed the creation of this office. With the Ombudsman's Office up and running we can make huge strides in solving existing crises and preventing future ones."

"This is the communication avenue we've been needing from the customer to the utility to the Commission," said Commissioner Tom Forese. "Elijah will be an important point person to forwarding the Commission's water policies and putting them in action where they are needed most."

Elijah joined the Arizona Corporation Commission in January of 2003 and has over 22 years of experience in public utility regulation. Elijah has been a key participant in Power Africa and USAID efforts through the National Association of Regulatory Commissioners (NARUC) in Nigeria and recently Uganda. His work at the Commission includes reviewing and making recommendations on utility matters filed by at the Commission including rate cases for electric, gas, water, telecommunications, consumer complaint, and rules and regulations. He begins his role as Ombudsman immediately and will help develop the new office and increase the Commission's outreach.

