

## **Mak, Chanda (ATG)**

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**From:** dougsanner@gmail.com  
**Sent:** Wednesday, June 10, 2020 3:46 PM  
**To:** Mak, Chanda (ATG)  
**Subject:** RE: Docket UG-200112 PSE Gas Water Heater Rental Service

Chandra—A UTC investigator looked into our case and while sympathetic to my complaint, found that PSE did not violate any law, rule, or tariff and supported their rejection of my claim. I seem to have no further avenue for my complaint—PSE acts like a pure monopoly with no sense/incentive for customer service or fair business practices, despite their public claims of being a valued community member. They are regulated by a commission that sides with them, even after acknowledging to me privately that their business practices are rotten. I can scream at the top of my lungs at a public meeting or send another public comment that will simply be ignored, and am exhausted by the systematic abuse of ratepayers with a government oversight board that seems to side with the Utility even when wrong. My family will survive this loss (or institutional theft), but I'm disgusted by PSE and the regulatory framework that put utility interests above consumer protection. Sincerely, Douglas Sanner.

Thank you.

On Tue, Jun 9, 2020, 3:19 PM Trier, John (UTC) <[john.trier@utc.wa.gov](mailto:john.trier@utc.wa.gov)> wrote:

I agree with you Mr. Sanner. I, individually and not on behalf of the commission, don't think that the equipment leasing business is one that a regulated utility should be in the providing either and am hopeful to see it stop if the transfer is approved. To me, PSE should only be providing energy services (electric and natural gas) to consumers as expected of a public utility.

I believe that the calculations used to set the rate for the water heater rental service were based upon the cost of a water heater and the labor costs for installation spread out over a ten year period, and the average service life of a natural gas water heater is in the 8-12 year range. I do find it somewhat convenient that PSE had a water heater installed that was nearing the end of its service life at the time you signed the lease, and never sent out anyone to inspect or perform maintenance in the nearly 17 years (or at least the last six years since the appliance was removed) since you purchased that property and signed the lease.

So while I have to uphold the company's position in this case, as they have the signed lease document and the water heater rental service charge is included in its commission approved tariff, hopefully in the future there won't be a water heater rental service in PSE's tariff for there to be consumer issues with.

Please let me know if you have any additional comments or concerns.

Sincerely,

**John Trier**

Consumer Complaint Investigator

(888) 333-9882 Toll Free

[John.Trier@utc.wa.gov](mailto:John.Trier@utc.wa.gov)

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**From:** [dougsanner@gmail.com](mailto:dougsanner@gmail.com) [mailto:[dougsanner@gmail.com](mailto:dougsanner@gmail.com)]

**Sent:** Tuesday, June 9, 2020 1:30 PM

**To:** Trier, John (UTC) <[john.trier@utc.wa.gov](mailto:john.trier@utc.wa.gov)>

**Subject:** RE: WA UTC Complaint CAS-26870-B3C1Z9 for Douglas Sanner CRM:0133628

Mr. Trier—Thank you for investigating my complaint and your not totally unexpected response. While my complaint will continue to fall on deaf ears by both the UTC and PSE, I stand firm in my belief that this is an inappropriate practice for a “public utility” that claims to operate in the public good. I think the whole water heater rental concept is a bad customer practice to begin with, but if it were to continue, here are a couple suggestions:

- Lease terms should not be month to month or extend beyond the useful life of the asset. PSE fully recovered the cost of the water heater in probably 8-10 years, yet continued to bill for the asset for over twenty years.
- There should have been a sticker or notification on the water heater that said “PSE Property: Please contact PSE for repairs or replacement”
- There should be some regular communication between PSE and its customers—Our records show you still have a leased water heater on your account, if you no longer have this equipment, please contact PSE.

I work in public sector finance and feel completely duped by PSE practices. I only wonder how many other Washington customers are being similarly ripped off by our “public utilities”.

Sincerely, Douglas Sanner

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows 10

**From:** [Trier, John \(UTC\)](#)

**Sent:** Tuesday, June 9, 2020 11:52 AM

**To:** [dougsanner@gmail.com](mailto:dougsanner@gmail.com)

**Subject:** FW: WA UTC Complaint CAS-26870-B3C1Z9 for Douglas Sanner CRM:0133628

Good morning Mr. Sanner,

I am getting back to you regarding your Puget Sound Energy (PSE) complaint. In your complaint you had said that PSE had billed you approximately \$2,448 to \$3,672 over the past 17 years for a water heater valued at approximately \$80 in 2003.

During my investigation I found that a lease had been signed for the water heater rental service in 2003. Item 1 of the lease includes language that the lease is month to month, but requires a 30 day notice for termination by either party. In addition, Item 5 of the lease also states that the customer agrees not to tamper with, adjust, repair, or relocate the appliance without obtaining permission from PSE.

When the water heater was replaced in 2013 it would likely have been fully depreciated at that point, and if PSE had been notified it would have terminated the monthly rental charge at that time.

PSE found no record of any communication to it to notify of the water heater's replacement or removal until May 23, 2020, after which it has ceased billing the monthly water heater rental charge.

For your reference, I have attached copies of the original 2003 lease agreement, the oldest bill on file (PSE is only required to keep customer billing records for six years) from 2011, and the most recent bill indicating the water heater rental charges.

PSE is not in violation of any law, rule, or tariff in this matter. PSE will not be issuing any further credit or refund of charges for this service on this account.

At this time I am closing your complaint. I understand this may not be the outcome you were seeking. If you have any questions or need additional assistance please call me at 1-888-333-9882, Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

**John Trier**

Consumer Complaint Investigator

(888) 333-9882 Toll Free

[John.Trier@utc.wa.gov](mailto:John.Trier@utc.wa.gov)

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**From:** [Mak, Chanda \(ATG\)](#)

**Sent:** Wednesday, June 10, 2020 7:06 AM

**To:** [dougsanner@gmail.com](mailto:dougsanner@gmail.com)

**Subject:** RE: Docket UG-200112 PSE Gas Water Heater Rental Service

Dear Douglas Sanner:

Thank you for contacting the Washington Attorney General's office, Public Counsel Unit, and for providing your comment on Puget Sound Energy's (PSE) water heater service program (Docket UG-200112). The Public Counsel Unit represents residential and small business customers in proceedings before the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (WUTC). Public Counsel has been actively involved in this matter on behalf of PSE customers.

Thank you for your comments about PSE's water heater leasing program. As part of our work, we collect public comments received by our office and the WUTC, and file them as an exhibit into the record, which will be considered by the Commission as they make their decision. **Your comment will be included in this exhibit.**

Recently, an all-party settlement agreement was reached, which includes Public Counsel. The Settlement Agreement along with documents in support were filed on May 22nd with the Commission. To view the terms of the Settlement Agreement, please visit the WUTC website at <https://www.utc.wa.gov/docs/Pages/DocketLookup.aspx> and type in the docket number listed above in the search bar.

A *virtual* public hearing is currently scheduled in this matter where customers can comment directly before the WUTC Commissioners. You might consider attending. It will take place at the following date and time:

**Thursday, June 18, 2019**

**Time:** 6:00 – 7:30 p.m.

The meeting will take place virtually via Skype Meeting or Telephone

**Skype Meeting:** [Click this link to join the Skype Meeting](#)

**Phone Conference:** 360-407-3810 and logging in with the Conference ID: 5023028

Public Counsel also prepared a [fact/information sheet](#) about this matter on our website, which you can visit using this [link here](#).

If you cannot attend, you can also direct any additional comments you might have to the WUTC via the following methods:

Via email at: [consumer@utc.wa.gov](mailto:consumer@utc.wa.gov)

Via online comment form at: <http://www.utc.wa.gov/comment/form>

By mail at: UTC, P.O. Box 47250, Olympia, WA 98504

By phone at: 1.800.562.6150

Again, thank you for taking the time to contact our office on this important matter and for your comments. Please feel free to contact me if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,

Chanda Mak  
Legal Assistant for Public Counsel Unit  
Washington State Office of the Attorney General  
800 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Suite 2000 | Seattle, Washington 98104

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**From:** dougsanner@gmail.com <dougsanner@gmail.com>

**Sent:** Friday, May 29, 2020 8:48 AM

**To:** comments@utc.wa.gov; ATG WWW E-mail Public Counsel <Utility@ATG.WA.GOV>

**Subject:** Docket UG-200112 PSE Gas Water Heater Rental Service

I received the Notice of Requested Transfer of PSE Natural Gas Water Heater Rental Service, dated May 18, 2020, quite possibly the only communication I ever received from PSE on this “service” since I entered into a month-to-month lease when I purchased my home in March 2003. Unbeknownst to me and my family, we have been paying PSE monthly lease charges of approximately \$12-18/month for the past 17 years for equipment we have privately owned since we replaced our water heater at our own expense in December 2013. When I contacted the PSE Lease Office about this apparent account error, I have essentially received a “too bad, so sad” response from their customer service staff who essentially have said I should have been more aware of this agreement. PSE staff did send an inspector to my house to verify that we in fact no longer had the leased equipment on our property and discontinued this billing in May 2020.

I would not have been made aware of this PSE “service” without the recent UTC notification. I find PSE’s business practices to be deceptive, while potentially “legal”—essentially we have paid PSE approximately \$2,448-\$3,672 over the past 17 years for a used water heater that had a value of approximately \$280 in 2003. I say approximately, because PSE staff have not provided any requested account records for my property. I filed a “claim” with PSE to review this case,

and while PSE acknowledged receipt of this claim, I have not received a formal response yet. While we should have admittedly been more aware of this agreement and more closely scrutinized monthly PSE billing statements, this financial agreement has caused real financial harm to my family as we prepare to retire. As a public utility with oversight by the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (UTC), I oppose PSE's business practices related to the Equipment Rental Services and the transfer of this service to any other company that will potentially be even more deceptive than Puget Sound Energy. I will also forward my concerns to the Public Counsel Unit of the Washington Office of the Attorney General.

If you have questions about this comment or would like additional information about my PSE account, please call, mail, or email me at the contact information below.

Douglas Sanner  
14212 SE 51<sup>st</sup> Street  
Bellevue, WA 98006  
[dougsanner@gmail.com](mailto:dougsanner@gmail.com)

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