



# ATTORNEY GENERAL OF WASHINGTON

Public Counsel

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August 21, 2020

**SENT VIA WUTC WEB PORTAL**

Mark L. Johnson  
Executive Director and Secretary  
Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission  
621 Woodland Square Loop SE  
Lacey, Washington 98503

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State Of WASH.  
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COMMISSION

Re: *Avista Corporation's Proposed Modifications to tariff Schedule 80 "Meter Reading and Billing Practices"*  
Dockets UE-200692 and UG-200693

Dear Mr. Johnson:

The Public Counsel Unit of the Washington State Attorney General's Office ("Public Counsel") respectfully submits these comments in advance of the August 27, 2020 Open Meeting. These comments are in response to Avista Corporation's ("Avista") filing of proposed changes to the Company's tariff Schedule 80 "Meter Reading and Billing Practices." Public Counsel has previously commented on Avista's Advanced Metering Opt-Out Tariff and appreciates the opportunity to comment further on this filing.

The changes requested add language to the tariff addressing the issue of customers refusing to sign the Opt-Out form and also refusing to have a communicating meter installed. If a customer refuses to sign the standard form, the customer will be deemed to have opted-out of receiving a communicating meter and will be subject to the opt-out terms and conditions, including the \$10.00 monthly manual meter-reading charge. Avista notes that some customers have threatened to deny access to Avista employees attempting to install a communicating meter, and have also made threats to Avista employees if they access their property.

***Public Counsel's Recommendation***

Public Counsel recommends the Commission approve the modifications to tariff Schedule 80.

Avista offers the following three options to deal with issues stemming from customers' refusal to sign the standard form, noting that options one and two are not favorable, and requesting approval of option three.

To: Mark L. Johnson, Executive Secretary  
Re: Avista Corporation's Proposed Modifications to tariff Schedule 80 "Meter Reading and Billing Practices"  
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- (1) Avista could deny the customers the ability to opt-out of receiving a communicating meter on the grounds that they refuse to sign and return an Application Form, on the grounds that the service tariffs permit Avista personnel onto a customer's property to maintain safe operation of equipment. Therefore, the Company would then plan to install a communicating meter in spite of customer objections, which the customers have stated they will refuse to allow access for the Company to do so.
- (2) The Company could disconnect the customers from service, because a condition of receiving service from Avista is to allow safe access to the Company.
- (3) The Company can modify its tariff Schedule 80 so that if a customer refuses to sign Avista's standard Application Form by October 1, 2020, to receive a non-communicating meter and refuses to allow the Company to install a communicating meter, the customer will be deemed to have opted-out of receiving a communicating meter and will be subject to the opt out terms and conditions.

Public Counsel recognizes there is no perfect solution given the circumstances, but agrees with Avista that option three is best to preserve customer choice, ensure employee safety, and cover the added cost of manual meter reading. Public Counsel also recognizes that Avista has made a reasonable effort to communicate with these customers, but has still been unable to have customers either sign an opt-out Application Form or accept the installation of a communicating meter. Because option three recognizes the customers' preference, while also balancing the ability of the Company provide the preferred service, Public Counsel supports the tariff modification.

Public Counsel appreciates the opportunity to submit these comments. If you have any questions about this filing, please contact Sarah Laycock at (206) 496-9989 or via e-mail at [Sarah.Laycock@atg.wa.gov](mailto:Sarah.Laycock@atg.wa.gov), or Corey Dahl at 206-464-6380 or via e-mail at [Corey.Dahl@atg.wa.gov](mailto:Corey.Dahl@atg.wa.gov).

Sincerely,

*/s/ Lisa W. Gafken*

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