

## **OPC Staff take Prominent Role at NASUCA Annual Meeting.**

People's Counsel Elizabeth A. Noël has sent a contingent of her best and brightest staff to share their knowledge and skills as panelists at the 2005 NASUCA annual meeting November 14-17th. Led by Attorney Brian Edmonds, OPC accountant Naunihal Gumer and Attorney Joy Ragsdale, OPC staff will moderate a panels on "What Can Consumer Advocates do Now to Help Low Income Customers Survive the Winter" Attorney Edmonds; "Tax Implications of EPACT 2005" will be moderated by Naunihal Gumer and; "Broadband: What is it and How Does it Work?" will be moderated by Attorney Joy Ragsdale. "I am proud of this team's work at the Office of the People's Counsel and I believe they will be a valuable asset to NASUCA's process of "enlightenment" stated People's Counsel Noël.

"As evident from the agenda, NASUCA is clearly exhibiting leadership on the issues of importance that advocates and regulators must embrace; Liheap and weatherization, enforcement of consumer protection laws, municipal broadband and regional energy conservation to name but a few" said the People's Counsel.

Attorney Brian Edmonds will share with the NASUCA members OPC's "Roll Call Report" in which the Office has chronicled many of its activities that collectively express the greater "themes" that guide its work. Key amongst these themes are OPC's efforts to provide support for consumers through Joint Utility Discount Day (JUDD), investigation of utility tariff compliance, OPC's petition for the PSC to adopt measures to reduce the financial burden on winter heating customers, "Smart Meter" test program to convey price signals to consumers, and recognizing the lay advocates who contribute to OPC's success through the OPC Consumer Advocacy Award.

The "**Roll Call Report**" also highlights the Office's recent "**Energy Summit**," an outstanding effort conducted by OPC to mitigate the impact of the high energy costs predicted for the upcoming winter heating season. OPC filed a petition with the DC PSC asking it to initiate a proceeding to develop programs and strategies to ease potential hardships consumers might suffer if they are unable to pay their utility bills. On November 8, "**Energy Summit 2005, Answering the Wake Up Call to Assist D.C. Consumers in 2005 and Beyond**" was convened by OPC. There were over 60 identified stakeholders from all sectors of the affected community, including the gas, electric and water companies, community agencies and organizations, as well as representatives from the city council and the council of governments. These stakeholders successfully developed long and short term action points and made commitments to follow through on their plans during the current winter heating season.

"It is both an exciting and challenging time for the Office and we are delighted to share and exchange our successes with our fellow advocates in pursuit of our common goals," said Ms. Noël.