

UFOG

Utah Foundation for Open Government

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August 13, 2007

Dear Chairman Boyer, Commissioners,

I am writing you in regards to Questar's recent request that the commission limit public participation in rate increase hearings to comments on whether such increases are fair.

These hearings have been open to all citizens (ratepayers) in the past and to make changes that limit public access to accommodate the entity requesting the rate increase would not serve the public interest. Public utilities are regulated by the government and therefore hearings before the commission should be open to the comment of the people for whom utilities are regulated.

While the public does not frequently participate in these hearings, the ability to do so should an individual so choose is one of the tenets of a democratic society. As a governmental agency, you represent the citizens and not the entities that come before you in the process.

It is particularly disturbing to our members that Questar has sought this change in response to the efforts of an individual, Roger Ball, to participate in the process.

It is the nature of the democratic process to allow all those who wish to be heard about how they are governed (including what utility rates they are required to pay) to be able to do so, regardless of what they have to say. To limit such expression is unconstitutional.

Questar representatives' attempts to muzzle detractors such as Mr. Ball, claiming that it will ensure a smoother process, are contrary to the public good and to the principles of open government.

We ask you to reject Questar's proposed rule change that would require any citizen to hire a lawyer in order to be able to speak at the rate increase hearings. Most citizens do not have the money to hire a lawyer to represent them at these hearings.

Through its own processes, the Commission has a mechanism in place to maintain control of its hearings. Do commission members really want to turn that control over to a utility company whose primary responsibility is to its shareholders?

As a citizen coalition formed (in 1996) to encourage, sponsor and facilitate the public's right to know about the workings of government at all levels and to foster open government, we the board members of the Utah Foundation for Open Government, strongly oppose Questar's suggestions and ask the Commission to reject them in no uncertain terms.

Sincerely,



Linda Petersen
President

Board Members

Sherilyn Bennion
Paul Murphy
Kim Wixon
Michael J. Fox
Sallie Young
Connie Coyne
Donald Meyers

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