

A Day in the Life of a Utility Commissioner:  
The Commissioner's Diary

*Dear Diary,*

*I had a wonderful day today creating economic development and protecting the people of the state.*

*The day started off as usual with a power company chief lobbyist showing up with my Starbucks coffee, a bouquet of roses and a box of chocolates. He admires me so; he thinks of me as a father figure.*

*I had the latest report of consumer complaints on my desk, and we spent awhile laughing at them. People can be so silly.*

*Then I got down to business. A man who contributed \$250 to my election campaign wants electricity for his fishing shack down on the river where he and his drinking buddies spend a few weekends a year. The power company says it will take over \$50,000 to run power through the swamp; and they want him to pay for it. I told the lobbyist everyone deserves to have electricity when they want it. Besides, the spending will stimulate the economy.*

*He told me he would take care of it and will hide the money in their next rider that comes up for approval. He, of course, expects me to vote for the rider as proposed.*

*We then talked about an important presentation they are preparing for me at a luxury hotel at the beach in a few weeks. The power company has an important economic study*

*on how much money they can raise for my re-election fund. They will be arranging contributions from other companies they do business with. Their employees who want to get ahead will be making contributions. This should give me plenty of money to beat any reform-minded candidate. This doesn't hurt anyone; the utility workers just pad their travel expenses in order to cover this very important cost of doing business.*

*I went to lunch in the state cafeteria, and my table was filled with admiring staff members. I regaled them with some Indian chants I learned in summer camp when I was 14. A lot of big shots in state government came over to my table to speak to me; I'm such an important person.*

*In the afternoon I met at length with the Vice-President of Regulatory Affairs from the gas company. They are having trouble because the Securities and Exchange Commission has joined the regulatory staffs of all the states they operate in by complaining about their program of shifting money to the unregulated subsidiary of their holding company.*

*He has fixed me up a nice speech to give at the next Utility Regulators' conference where I will defend states' rights and call for federal regulators to leave regulation of local utilities to those of us who know them best.*

*All in all a very good day. The ratepayers are lucky to have me on duty.*