



FLORIDA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

# CONSUMER BULLETIN

JULIA L. JOHNSON, COMMISSIONER

## COMMISSIONER JOHNSON'S FAREWELL COLUMN

This month's column is different from the previous columns I have prepared for you. The purpose of this month's column is to announce that I have resigned my position as Commissioner with the Florida Public Service Commission (PSC). This is the last time I'll speak to you as your Commissioner. We've been together seven years and before I go, I wanted to share a few thoughts, some of which of I have been saving for a long time.

First, it's been the honor of my life to be your Commissioner. So many of you have written the past few weeks to say thanks, but I could say as much to you. I am grateful for the opportunity you gave me to serve.

As many of you know, on Friday, August 20, 1999, Governor Jeb Bush appointed me Chairperson of the Information Service Technology Development Task Force. This new task force will look at what the state can do to attract the business of more computer companies. I am very excited to be a part of this task force, as

I will have the opportunity to work in partnership with state government, private industry and consumers to ensure that Florida citizens are true beneficiaries of the Information Age.

One of my priorities as chairperson of the task force is to ensure that all citizens have access to the Internet. African-Americans and Hispanics are not getting on line as fast as their counterparts. The governor is cognizant of the "digital divide," and we will have special focus on minorities, senior citizens and women to make sure we are not leaving anyone behind.

So much has happened since Governor Lawton Chiles appointed me a Commissioner in 1992. We have faced many challenges. The first year of my chairmanship provided many demands -- from completing the largest-ever docketed case -- Southern States -- to beginning the process of reviewing and revising our rules on slamming, a process that included public hearings held across the state to ensure public input on this widespread problem. There is also the area code is-

sue that has produced nine new telephone area codes in Florida since 1995.

The PSC will continue to work closely with the Federal Communications Commission as they implement the Federal Telecommunications Act, to ensure that federal rules do not negatively affect Florida's consumers. The PSC has provided and will continue to promote consumer awareness and education programs such as public service announcements, editorial board visits and utilization of the television and radio media on the issues the PSC regulates to ensure that Florida consumers understand their options and their rights.

This column will continue to run in your paper. PSC Commissioner E. Leon Jacobs, Jr. will take over next month, and he will continue to provide you with pertinent information that is decided at our agenda conferences and hearings. He is excited to take over this important task, and I believe he will continue to keep you educated and briefed on issues that affect you, your family and your community. Thank you for seven great years.

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*Julia L. Johnson is a Florida Public Service Commissioner. She served as Commission Chairman from January 7, 1997, through January 5, 1999. The PSC sets the rates utility companies charge for natural gas, electric and telephone service within the state. In 37 counties, it sets the price you pay for the water you drink, if your water company is privately-owned.*