

DECOTIIS, FITZPATRICK & COLE, LLP

PUBLIC UTILITIES

PUBLIC UTILITIES LAW IS A SPECIALIZED, UNIQUELY STRUCTURED AREA OF LAW IN WHICH ISSUES AND CHANGES CAN DIRECTLY AFFECT LITERALLY MILLIONS OF CUSTOMERS. Because utilities are so closely regulated, any alteration in the regulatory or operating environment can have an immediate, dramatic operational impact. Drawing on its experience in matters involving electric, gas, water, sewer and cable television utilities, DeCotiis has developed an unparalleled Public Utilities Practice Group.

Unlike virtually any other area of law, there is no conventional reporting system for public utilities decisions. Additionally, there is a relatively small group of practitioners in the field. Because of these factors, effective representation requires an enormous amount of experience and a deep understanding of the intricacies, processes and nuances of the legal and administrative landscape. DeCotiis attorneys are some of the most knowledgeable, experienced public utilities lawyers in New Jersey. Our lawyers regularly practice before the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities, and include a former longstanding member of the BPU's Legal Department. The attorneys in the group are thus able to analyze any emerging issue from both the perspective of the regulatory body as well as the utility - an invaluable dual perspective that gives DeCotiis clients an unsurpassed understanding of potential outcomes, and their impact.

Because they are so immersed in, and conversant with, developments in New Jersey public utilities law, our practitioners excel at keeping clients apprised of both current and potential issues, decisions and so on. This is particularly important for smaller utilities, such as regional water companies, who may be disproportionately affected by these actions. The ability to anticipate events rather than simply reacting to them can be a crucial strategic advantage. Another is DeCotiis' ability to work effectively and closely with our practitioners in other fields, such as environmental or municipal law, when a situation requires it.

DeCotiis has represented a wide array of public utilities before the Board and (in the instance of solid waste utilities) the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection. Attorneys in the Group have

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participated in complex rate cases on behalf of public utilities, and have represented non-regulated energy groups, public agencies and municipal entities as interveners in rate cases and other public utility matters, such as deregulation proceedings and complicated merger transactions. The Public Utilities Group has the experience and judgment needed to handle any case involving public utility issues, and to help ensure both that providers realize an appropriate return on their investments and that the public is provided with safe, adequate and proper service at just and reasonable rates in accordance with law.

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