

IPU RESEARCH NOTE

PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION ORIGINS AND EVOLUTION

© INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC UTILITIES, MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

March 2015 • ipu.msu.edu

Jurisdiction	Commission or Agency	Structural Location ¹	Appoint or elect	Number comms.	Start	End
Federal	<i>Interstate Commerce Commission</i>	Dept. of Interior	A	5	1887	1889
		Independent	A	5	1889	1906
		Independent	A	7	1906	1921
		Independent	A	11	1921	1982
		Independent	A	5	1982	1995
	<i>Civil Aeronautics Board</i>	Independent	A	5	1938	1984
	<i>Federal Power Commission</i> ²	Independent	A	0	1920	1930
		Independent	A	5	1930	1977
	<i>Federal Energy Regulatory Commission</i>	Independent	A	5	1977	Present
	<i>Federal Communications Commission</i>	Independent	A	5	1934	Present
	<i>Alabama Railroad Commission</i>	Independent	E	3	1881	1915
	<i>Alabama Public Service Commission</i>	Independent	E	3	1915	Present
	Alabama	<i>Alabama Railroad Commission</i>	Independent	E	3	1915
<i>Alabama Public Service Commission</i>		Independent	E	3	1915	Present
Alaska	<i>Alaska Public Service Commission</i>	Independent	A	3	1960	1970
	<i>Alaska Public Utilities Commission</i>	Independent	A	3	1970	1975
		Independent	A	5	1975	1999
	<i>Alaska Pipeline Commission</i>	Independent	A	n/a	1972	1981
	<i>Regulatory Commission of Alaska</i>	Dept. Commerce, Community & Econ. Dev.	A	5	1999	Present
Arizona*	<i>Arizona Corporation Commission</i>	Independent	E	3	1912	2000
		Independent	E	5	2000	Present

Arkansas	<i>Arkansas Railroad Commission</i>	Independent	A	3	1899	1919	
	<i>Arkansas Corporation Commission</i>	Independent	A	3	1919	1921	
	<i>Arkansas Railroad Commission</i>	Independent	A	3	1921	1933	
	<i>Arkansas Corporation Commission</i>	Independent	A	3	1933	1945	
	<i>Fact Finding Tribunal</i>	Independent	A	na	1933	1935	
	<i>Arkansas Department of Public Utilities</i>	Independent	A	3	1935	1945	
	<i>Arkansas Public Service Commission</i>	Independent	A	3	1945	1971	
		Dept. of Commerce	A	3	1971	1983	
California*	<i>California Railroad Commission</i>	Independent	A	3	1983	Present	
	<i>California Public Utilities Commission</i>	Independent	A	3	1879	1946	
Colorado	<i>Colorado Railroad Commissioner</i>	Independent	A	1	1885	1896-	
	<i>Colorado State Railroad Commission</i> ³	Independent	A	3	-1907	1909-	
		Independent	A	3	-1910	1917	
	<i>Public Utilities Commission of the State of Colorado</i>	Dept. of Regulatory Agencies	A	3	1914	Present	
Connecticut	<i>State of Connecticut Railroad Commissioners</i>	Independent	A	3	1853	1855	
	<i>State of Connecticut General Railroad Commissioners</i>	Independent	A	3	1855	1875	
	<i>State of Connecticut Board of Railroad Commissioners</i>	Independent	A	3	1875	1911	
	<i>Connecticut Public Utilities Commission</i>	Independent	A	3	1911	1974	
		Independent	A	5	1974	1975	
	<i>Connecticut Public Utilities Control Authority</i>	Independent	A	5	1975	1979	
	<i>Connecticut Division of Public Utility Control</i>	Dept. of Business Regulation	A	5	1979	1980	
	<i>State of Connecticut Department of Public Utility Control</i>	Independent	A	5	1980	2011	
		Public Utilities Regulatory Authority	Dept. of Energy and Environ. Protection	A	3	2011	Present
	Delaware	<i>Delaware Public Service Commission</i>	Dept. of State	A	5	1949	Present
District of Columbia	<i>Public Utilities Commission of the District of Columbia</i>	Independent	A	3	1913	1964	
	<i>Public Service Commission of the District of Columbia</i>	Independent	A	3	1964	Present	
Florida	<i>Florida Railroad Commission</i>	Independent	E	3	1887	1891-	
		Independent	E	3	-1897	1947	
	<i>Florida Railroad and Public Utilities Commission</i>	Independent	E	3	1947	1963	
	<i>Florida Public Utility Commission</i>	Independent	E	3	1963	1978	
	<i>Florida Public Service Commission</i>	Independent	A	5	1979	Present	
Georgia	<i>Railroad Commission of Georgia</i>	Independent	A	3	1879	1906	
		Independent	E	3	1906	1907	
		Independent	E	5	1907	1922	
	<i>Georgia Public Service Commission</i>	Independent	E	5	1922	Present	

Guam	<i>Guam Public Utilities Commission</i>	Independent	A	7	1985	Present
Hawaii	<i>Hawaii Public Utilities Commission</i>	Independent	A	3	1913	Present
Idaho	<i>Idaho Public Utilities Commission</i>	Independent	A	3	1913	Present
Illinois	<i>Illinois Railroad and Warehouse Commission</i>	Independent	A	3	1871	1913
	<i>Illinois Public Utilities Commission</i>	Independent	A	5	1913	1921
		Independent	A	7	1921	1933
		Independent	A	5	1933	1983
		Independent	A	7	1983	1998
		Independent	A	5	1998	Present
Indiana	<i>Railroad Commission of Indiana</i>	Independent	A	3	1895	1913
	<i>Public Service Commission of Indiana</i>	Independent	A	5	1913	1933
	<i>Indiana Public Service Commission</i>	Independent	A	3	1933	1984
		Independent	A	5	1984	1987
	<i>Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission</i>	Independent	A	5	1987	Present
Iowa	<i>Iowa Board of Railroad Commissioners</i>	Independent	E	3	1878	1937
	<i>Iowa State Commerce Commission</i>	Independent	E	3	1937	1963
		Independent	A	3	1963	1986
	<i>Iowa Utilities Board</i>	Dept. of Commerce	A	3	1986	Present
Kansas	<i>Kansas Railroad Commission</i>	Independent	E	3	1883	1911
	<i>Kansas Public Utilities Commission</i>	Independent	A	3	1911	1920
	<i>Kansas Court of Industrial Relations</i>	Independent	A	3	1920	1921
	<i>Kansas Public Utilities Commission</i>	Independent	A	3	1921	1924
	<i>Kansas Public Service Commission</i>	Independent	A	3	1924	1925
		Independent	A	5	1925	1933
		<i>Kansas State Corporation Commission</i>	Independent	A	5	1933
		Independent	A	3	1935	Present
Kentucky	<i>Kentucky Railroad Commission</i>	Independent	E	3	1880	2000
	<i>Kentucky Public Service Commission</i>	Independent	A	3	1934	1979
	<i>Kentucky Energy Regulatory Commission</i>	Independent	A	3	1979	1981
	<i>Kentucky Public Service Commission</i>	Independent	A	3	1981	Present
Louisiana*	<i>Railroad Commission of Louisiana</i>	Independent	E	3	1898	1921
	<i>Louisiana Public Service Commission</i>	Dept. of Public Service	E	3	1921	1976
		Independent	E	5	1976	Present
Maine	<i>Maine Board of Railroad Commissioners</i>	Independent	A	3	1858	1914
	<i>Maine Public Utilities Commission</i>	Independent	A	3	1914	Present
Maryland	<i>Maryland Public Service Commission</i>	Independent	A	5	1910	Present

Massachusetts	<i>Massachusetts Board of Railroad Commissioners</i>	Independent	A	3	1861	1913	
	<i>Massachusetts Board of Gas Commissioners</i>	Independent	A	3	1885	1887	
	<i>Massachusetts Board of Gas & Electric Light Commissioners</i>	Independent	A	3	1887	1919	
	<i>Massachusetts Public Service Commission</i>	Independent	A	3	1913	1919	
	<i>Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities</i>	Independent	A	3	1919	1997	
	<i>Massachusetts Department of Telecommunications & Energy</i>	Independent	A	3	1997	2007	
	<i>Massachusetts Department of Telecommunications and Cable</i>	Independent	A	1	2007	Present	
	<i>Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities</i>	Independent	A	3	2007	Present	
	Michigan	<i>Michigan Railroad Commissioner</i>	Independent	A	1	1873	1909
		<i>Michigan Railroad Commission</i>	Independent	A	3	1909	1919
<i>Michigan Public Utilities Commission</i>		Independent	A	5	1919	1939	
<i>Michigan Public Service Commission</i>		Independent	A	5	1939	1965	
		Dept. of Commerce	A	3	1965	1996	
		Dept. of Commerce & Industry Services	A	3	1996	2003	
		Dept. of Labor & Economic Growth	A	3	2003	2008	
	Dept. of Energy, Labor, & Economic Growth	A	3	2008	2011		
	Dept. of Licensing & Regulatory Affairs	A	3	2011	Present		
Minnesota	<i>Minnesota Railroad Commissioner</i>	Independent	A	1	1871	1874	
	<i>Minnesota Railroad Commission</i>	Independent	A	3	1874	1875	
	<i>Minnesota Railroad Commissioner</i>	Independent	A	1	1875	1885	
	<i>Railroad & Warehouse Commission of the State of Minnesota</i>	Independent	A	3	1885	1911	
		Independent	E	3	1911	1967	
	<i>Minnesota Public Service Commission</i>	Independent	E	3	1967	1975	
		Independent	A	5	1975	1980	
	<i>Minnesota Public Utilities Commission</i>	Independent	A	5	1980	Present	
Mississippi	<i>Mississippi Railroad Commission</i>	Independent	E	3	1884	1938	
	<i>Mississippi Public Service Commission</i>	Independent	E	3	1938	Present	
Missouri	<i>Missouri Board of Railroad and Warehouse Commissioners</i>	Independent	A	3	1875	1913	
	<i>Missouri Public Service Commission</i>	Independent	A	5	1913	Present	
Montana	<i>Montana Board of Railroad Commissioners</i>	Independent	E	3	1907	1971	
	<i>Montana Public Service Commission</i>	Independent	E	5	1913	Present	
Nebraska*	<i>Nebraska Board of Railroad Commissioners</i> ⁴	Independent	E	0	1885	1887	
	<i>Nebraska Board of Transportation</i> ⁵	Independent	E	0	1887	1901-	
	<i>Nebraska State Railway Commission</i>	Independent	E	3	-1907	1964	
		Independent	E	5	1964	1972	
	<i>Nebraska Power Review Board</i>	Independent	A	5	1963	Present	
	<i>Nebraska Public Service Commission</i>	Independent	E	5	1972	Present	

Nevada	<i>Nevada Railroad Commission</i> ⁶	Independent	A	3	1907	1919
	<i>Nevada Public Service Commission</i>	Independent	A	3	1911	1919
	<i>Nevada Public Service Commission</i> ⁷	Independent	A	3	1919	1953
			A	4	1953	1957
			A	3	1957	1983
			A	5	1983	1997
	Public Utilities Commission of Nevada	Independent	A	3	1997	Present
New Hampshire	<i>New Hampshire County Railroad Commissioners</i>	Independent	A	10	1838	1844
	<i>Railroad Commissioners of the State of New Hampshire</i>	Independent	A	3	1844	1911
	<i>New Hampshire Public Service Commission</i>	Independent	A	3	1911	1951
	<i>New Hampshire Public Utilities Commission</i>	Independent	A	3	1951	Present
New Jersey	<i>New Jersey Board of Railroad Commissioners</i>	Independent	A	3	1907	1910
	<i>New Jersey Board of Public Utility Commissioners</i>	Independent	A	3	1910	1911
	<i>New Jersey Department of Public Utilities</i>	Independent	A	3	1911	1977
	<i>New Jersey Board of Regulatory Commissioners</i>	Dept. of Environ. Protection & Energy	A	3	1977	1994
	<i>State of New Jersey Board of Public Utilities</i>	Dept. of Treasury	A	3	1994	2001
			A	5	2001	Present
New Mexico*	<i>New Mexico State Corporation Commission</i>	Independent	E	3	1912	1999
	<i>New Mexico Public Service Commission</i>	Independent	E	3	1941	1999
	<i>New Mexico Public Regulation Commission</i>	Independent	E	5	1999	Present
	<i>New York Railroad Commission</i>	Independent	A	3	1855	1857
New York	<i>Railroads reported to State Engineer and Surveyor</i>	State Engineer and Surveyor	na	na	1857	1882
	<i>New York Board of Railroad Commissioners</i>	Independent	A	3	1882	1907
	<i>New York Board of Rapid Transit Commissioners</i>	Independent	A	na	1891	1907
	<i>New York Commission of Gas and Electricity</i>	Independent	A	na	1905	1907
	<i>New York Public Service Commission District I and II</i>	Independent	A	10	1907	1921
	<i>New York Transit Commission</i>	Independent	A	5	1921	1926
	<i>New York Public Service Commission</i>	Independent	A	5	1921	1926
	<i>New York Department of Public Service</i>	Independent	A	5	1926	1953
	<i>New York State Public Service Commission</i>	Dept. of Public Service	A	5	1953	Present

North Carolina	<i>North Carolina Railroad Commission</i>	Independent	A	3	1891	1899
	<i>North Carolina Corporation Commission</i>	Independent	A	3	1899	1933
	<i>North Carolina Office of Utilities Commission</i>	Independent	A	3	1941	1949
	<i>North Carolina Public Utilities Commission</i>	Independent	A	5	1949	1975
			A	7	1975	Present
North Dakota*	<i>Board of Railroad Commissioners of the State of North Dakota</i>	Independent	E	3	1885	1940
	<i>North Dakota Public Service Commission</i>	Independent	E	3	1940	Present
Ohio	<i>Ohio Commissioner of Railroads and Telegraphs</i>	Independent	A	1	1867	1906
	<i>Railroad Commission of Ohio</i>	Independent	A	3	1906	1911
	<i>Public Service Commission of Ohio</i>	Independent	A	3	1911	1913
	<i>Public Utilities Commission of Ohio</i>	Independent	A	3	1913	1983
				A	5	1983
Oklahoma*	<i>Oklahoma Corporation Commission</i>	Independent	E	3	1907	Present
Oregon	<i>Oregon Board of Railroad Commissioners</i>	Independent	A	2	1887	1889
			A	3	1889	1898-
	<i>Railroad Commission of Oregon</i>	Independent	A	3	-1907	1915
	<i>Public Service Commission of Oregon</i>	Independent	E	3	1915	1927
				A	3	1927
	<i>Public Utilities Commissioner of Oregon</i>	Independent	A	1	1931	1987
	<i>State of Oregon Public Utilities Commission</i>	Independent	A	3	1987	Present
Pennsylvania	<i>Pennsylvania State Railroad Commission</i>	Independent	A	3	1907	1913-
	<i>Public Service Comm. of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania</i>	Independent	A	7	-1914	1937
	<i>Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission</i>	Independent	A	5	1937	Present
Puerto Rico	<i>Puerto Rico Public Service Commission</i> ⁸		E	2	1917	1952
			A	3	1952	1962
			A	3	1962	
			A	5		Present
			A	5		Present
		<i>Puerto Rico Telecommunications Regulatory Board</i>	Independent	A	3	1996
			A	5	2013	Present

Rhode Island	<i>Rhode Island Commission</i>	Independent	E	3	1839	1874	
			A	1	1874	1912	
	<i>Rhode Island Public Utilities Commission</i>	Independent	A	3	1912	1935	
	<i>Division of Public Utilities</i>	Dept. of Taxation and Regulation	A	1	1935	1936	
		Dept. of Revenue and Regulation	A	1	1936	1969	
			A	3	1969	1981	
	<i>State of Rhode Island Public Utilities Commission</i>	Independent	A	3	1981	Present	
South Carolina	<i>Railroad Commission of South Carolina</i>	Independent	A	3	1878	1922	
	<i>South Carolina Public Service Commission</i>	Independent	E	3	1910	1922	
	<i>Railroad Commission of South Carolina</i>	Independent	E	7	1922	1934	
	<i>Public Service Commission of South Carolina</i>	Independent	E	7	1934	Present	
South Dakota	<i>South Dakota Board of Railroad Commissioners</i>	Independent	A	3	1885	1897	
			E	3	1897	1939	
	<i>South Dakota Public Utilities Commission</i>	Independent	E	3	1939	Present	
Tennessee	<i>Railroad Commission of State of Tennessee</i>	Independent	E	3	1897	1919	
	<i>Railroad & Public Utilities Commission of State of Tennessee</i>	Independent	E	3	1919	1955	
	<i>Tennessee Public Service Commission</i>	Independent	E	3	1955	1996	
	<i>Tennessee Regulatory Authority</i>	Independent	A	3	1996	2002	
				A	4	2002	2012
				A	5	2012	Present
Texas	<i>Railroad Commission of Texas</i>	Independent	A	3	1891	1894	
			E	3	1894	Present	
	<i>Texas Water Commission</i>	Independent	A	3	1985	1993	
	<i>Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission</i>	Independent	A	3	1993	2002	
	<i>Public Utility Commission of Texas</i>	Independent	A	3	1975	Present	
	<i>Texas Commission on Environmental Quality</i>	Independent	A	3	2002	Present	
Utah	<i>Public Utilities Commission of Utah</i>	Independent	A	3	1917	1935	
	<i>Public Service Commission of Utah</i>	Independent	A	3	1935	1941	
	<i>Commission of Business Regulation of Utah</i>	Dept. of Business Regulation	A	3	1941	1969	
	<i>Public Service Commission of Utah</i>	Dept. of Commerce	A	3	1969	1983	
			A	3	1983	Present	
Vermont	<i>Vermont Railroad Commissioner</i>	Independent	A	1	1855	1886	
	<i>Vermont Railroad Commission</i>	Independent	A	3	1886	1908	
	<i>Vermont Public Service Commission</i>	Independent	A	3	1908	1961	
	<i>Vermont Public Service Board</i>	Independent	A	3	1961	Present	

Virgin Islands	<i>Virgin Islands Public Services Commission</i>	Independent	A	7	1965	Present	
Virginia*	<i>Virginia Board of Public Works</i> ⁹	Independent	E	0	1816	1853	
			E	3	1853	1865	
			E	0	1865	1903	
	<i>Virginia Railroad Commissioner</i>	Independent	A	1	1877	1903	
	<i>Commonwealth of Virginia State Corporation Commission</i>	Independent	A	3	1903	1919	
			E	3	1919	1926	
			A	3	1926	1928	
			E	3	1928	Present	
Washington	<i>Railroad Commission of Washington</i>	Independent	A	3	1905	1911	
	<i>Public Service Commission of Washington</i>	Independent	A	3	1911	1921	
	<i>Department of Public Works of Washington</i>	Independent	A	3	1921	1935	
	<i>Department of Public Service of Washington</i>	Independent	A	3	1935	1945	
	<i>Department of Public Utilities of Washington</i>	Independent	A	1	1945	1949	
	<i>Department of Transportation of Washington</i>	Independent	A	1	1945	1949	
	<i>Washington Public Service Commission</i>	Independent	A	3	1949	1961	
	<i>Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission</i>	Independent	A	3	1961	Present	
	West Virginia	<i>Public Service Commission of West Virginia</i>	Independent	A	3	1913	Present
	Wisconsin	<i>Wisconsin Railroad Commission</i>	Independent	A	3	1874	1876
<i>Wisconsin Railroad Commissioner</i>		Independent	A	1	1876	1881	
			E	1	1881	1905	
	<i>Wisconsin Railroad Commission</i>	Independent	A	3	1905	1931	
	<i>Public Service Commission of Wisconsin</i>	Independent	A	3	1931	Present	
Wyoming	<i>Wyoming Public Service Commission</i>	State Board of Equalization	E	3	1915	1919	
			A	3	1919	1968	
			Independent	A	3	1968	Present

Italics indicate superseded agencies. na = not available or not applicable. -- = gap in jurisdiction.

* Constitutional commissions: Arizona, California, Louisiana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, and Virginia.

Sources: Commission websites, historical documents, state archives, and publications of the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners. Early data were also found in C. O. Rugles, *Aspects of the Organization, Functions, and Financing of State Public Utility Commissions* (Harvard University, 1937). Please contact ipu@msu.edu with comments or corrections.

¹ These data may be incomplete with respect to commission organizational affiliation with executive agencies.

² Commission administered by the Secretaries of War, Interior, and Agriculture.

³ Challenged on constitutional grounds, the Commission was tied up in court for two years before the Legislature made a second attempt.

⁴ Commission administered by the Attorney General, Secretary of State, and Auditor of Public Accounts.

⁵ Commission administered by the Attorney General, Secretary of State, Auditor of Public Accounts, State Treasurer, and Commissioner of Public Lands and Buildings.

⁶ The Legislature directed the Railroad Commission to serve ex officio as a Public Service Commission in 1911.

⁷ The Legislature raised the number of commissioners to 4 in 1953, with the State Engineer serving as the ex officio fourth member.

⁸ Information is incomplete.

⁹ Board administered by the Governor as President, the Treasurer and Attorney General, and ten private citizens chosen annually by the General Assembly. In 1831, the Board was administered by the Governor as President, the Lieutenant Governor, Treasurer, and Second Auditor. In 1833, the Lieutenant Governor was replaced by the Auditor, and in 1846, the Register of the Land Office was added to the Board. In 1865, the Governor was reinstated as President of the Board, which also included the Auditor and Treasurer.