

# An Overview of the S.C. Office of Regulatory Staff and Relevant Utility Issues

September 13, 2024

Presented by:

Ben Mustian, Chief of Legal Affairs and Strategic Communications at ORS

Nanette Edwards, Partner at Burr & Forman

# Today's Session

- 1** History of ORS
- 2** ORS's Traditional Responsibilities
- 3** Additional Departments
- 4** ORS Today
- 5** Items of Interest for Corporate Counsel

Slide 3

Slide 4

Slide 5

Slide 7

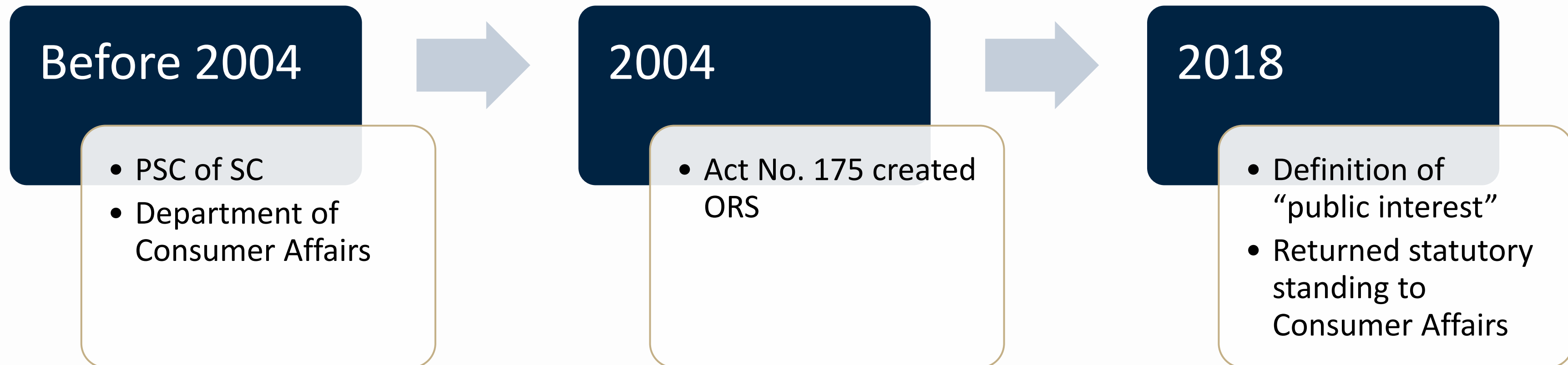
Slide 8

# History of ORS

Originally, ORS represented the “public interest of South Carolina,” which was statutorily defined as a balancing of:

1. concerns of the using and consuming public with respect to public utility services, regardless of the class of customer;
2. economic development and job attraction and retention in South Carolina; and
3. preservation of the financial integrity of the state's public utilities and continued investment in and maintenance of utility facilities so as to provide reliable and high quality utility services.

In 2018, the definition of “public interest” became “the concerns of the using and consuming public with respect to public utility services, regardless of the class of customer and preservation of continued investment in and maintenance of utility facilities so as to provide reliable and high quality utility services.”



# ORS's Traditional Responsibilities

- To investigate and make recommendations to the Commission regarding the regulated operations of public utilities. “Public utilities” primarily include investor owned:
  - Water and wastewater utilities (S.C. Code Ann. § 58-5-10)
  - Natural gas utilities (S.C. Code Ann. § 58-5-10)
  - Telephone utilities (S.C. Code Ann. § 58-9-10)
  - Railroads and Railways (S.C. Code Ann. § 58-17-10)
  - Motor Vehicle Carriers (S.C. Code Ann. § 58-23-10)
  - Electric Utilities (S.C. Code Ann. § 58-27-10)
- ORS does not regulate municipal utility systems.
- In 2019, Act No. 56 gave ORS limited authority to examine electric cooperatives.
- In 2021, Act No. 90 gave ORS additional responsibilities related to Santee Cooper.

# Additional Departments

1

## State Energy Office

Serves as the principal energy planning entity for the state.

2

## South Carolina Broadband Office

Central broadband planning body to coordinate with federal, state, regional, local, and private entities.

3

## South Carolina Equipment Distribution Program

Serves South Carolina residents who have trouble hearing or speaking on the phone.

# Additional Departments

4

## Pipeline Safety

Safety oversight for natural gas distribution and transmission pipelines.

5

## Railroad Safety

Works in partnership with the Federal Railroad Administration.

6

## Emergency Management

Works in coordination with the SC Emergency Management Division during disasters.

# ORS Today

- Approximately 95 employees
- Departments:
  - Utility Rates & Services
  - Finance, Accounting, Audit
  - Transportation and Safety
  - Consumer Services
  - Legal Affairs and Strategic Communications
  - Energy Office
  - SC Broadband Office - Technology and Outreach
  - Human Resources
  - Administration

# Items of Interest for Corporate Counsel

- Consumers (residential, commercial, and industrial) are impacted by utility rates (power, water, wastewater, transportation, and communications).
- Billions of dollars are spent on essential utility services for home and business.
- Rate Cases
- Fuel Proceedings
- Purchased Gas Adjustment
- Natural Gas Rate Stabilization Act
- Renewable, Energy Efficiency, Demand Side Management Programs
- Allowable Ex Parte Proceedings



# Presenters



**Nanette Edwards**

Partner, Columbia

T: 803-753-3213



**Ben Mustian**

Chief of Legal Affairs and  
Strategic Communications, ORS

T: 803-737-0898

# Thank you

*Connect with us | [www.burr.com](http://www.burr.com)*



*[www.linkedin.com/company/burrforman](http://www.linkedin.com/company/burrforman)*



*[www.twitter.com/burrforman](http://www.twitter.com/burrforman)*