

Licensing and Regulatory Boards and Commissions

Railroad Commission, 1907-1911

Public Service Commission, 1911-1997

Public Utilities Commission, 1997-

Administrative History

State regulation of railroads began in the eastern states in the pre-Civil War era. The regulatory move

In *Munn v. Illinois* (1877) the United States Supreme Court upheld the principle of state regulation of

Although Nevada did not have a railroad commission until 1907, earlier legislation addressed the grie

Legislation of 1879 went further into the area of railroad regulation. Statutes of that year prohibited di

The Nevada lawmakers imposed regulations upon two other businesses that were "clothed with

Nevada's regulatory legislation, most of it lacking provisions for effective enforcement, proved inadeq

The Nevada act of 1907 also established a Railroad Board, to consist of the Governor, Lieutenant Go

The Nevada agency differed in one significant way from the regulatory bodies of other states. The 19

Railroad charges were to be "reasonable and just"; and their services and facilities "

Section 7 set the maximum freight rates, with particular attention to charges for shipping ores. The C

The Commission was given the power to investigate complaints, conduct hearings regarding unreason

The commissioners' powers applied only to traffic within the state; federal court decisions had earlier

Over the next several years the Legislature continued to enact measures pertaining to the safety and

Not surprisingly, most of the railroads affected by Nevada's 1907 law brought suit in the United State

An ICC commissioner, in 1910, noted that "[t]he highest main-line rates to be found in the Unite

In its first annual report the commissioners expressed doubts about the wisdom of legislatively impos

As in other states, Nevada's Railroad Commission evolved into an agency with powers to regulate pu

Enacted also in 1911 was a measure designating the members of the Railroad Commission as the ch

An act of 1913 required companies supplying water to municipalities to furnish water for firefighting, a

In their report for 1918, the commissioners proudly announced that from 1907 to that year the agency

Nevertheless, it became increasingly obvious that neither Nevada nor any state had the power to ren

In 1919 the Legislature abolished the Railroad Commission, replacing it with a new Public Service Commission.

In most respects the act was generally along the lines of the 1907 measure, as amended. For example,

The act gave the Commission regulatory power over canal companies supplying water for irrigation. It

Throughout the 1920s, as a tribunal for intrastate cases and as Nevada's advocate before the ICC in

Legislation of the 1920s brought oil pipelines (1921), and air common carriers and radio (1928) under

An act of 1921 made the Commission responsible for issuing licenses for commercial motor vehicles

In 1929 the Commission's responsibility to cooperate with federal agencies was increased to include

In anticipation of the completion of Boulder (later Hoover) Dam and the availability of cheap and abundant

During World War II the agency received permission to issue "emergency temporary" certificates

By the end of 1952 the Commission controlled and supervised the following: "4 railroads; The Public

As is often the case with regulatory agencies, the Public Service Commission came to believe it had

Legislation of 1953 raised the number of commissioners to four, stipulating that one of them be the State

An act of 1957 dropped the number of commissioners back to three, all of whom were to perform the

A statute of 1957 (amended in 1963, 1965, 1967, 1973, 1989, and 1997) brought securities issued by

Legislative action in 1963 brought about a number of significant changes. An act of that year empowe

Community antenna television companies came under the purview of the Commission in 1967. Soon

For many years up to 1969 the chairman of the Commission had been an ex officio member of the Ta

As the Commission's powers and duties expanded, so too did its staff. Early in the agency's history th

Growing concerns over the environment and the impact of public utilities on it led to the passage of th

Since Fiscal Year 1971-1972 the Commission has received funds on a matching basis from the Fede

In 1975 two new divisions of the Commission were established by law. The function of the Division of

Because of inflation, the complexity of utilities' regulation, and the energy crisis, the Legislature, in a

Another serious matter was the public perception that the Commission was more responsive to the la

To provide greater representation of the public interest, the Legislature created the office of Advocate

A statute of 1977 required that the members of the Commission "be persons who are independent

An act of 1981 declared geothermal energy a public utility and its sale subject to control by the Commission

The increase of federal power and recent demands for the deregulation of industry have caused a dire

In 1997 the Public Service Commission became the Public Utilities Commission. The legislation making

Railroad Commission\Public Service Commission Records

General Files

Inclusive dates: 1909-1989. 81 cu. ft.

Arranged by type of business (transportation, utilities), and thereunder by year, and thereunder

The records consist mainly of the required annual reports of motor carrier and utilities companies subject to the Commission's regulation, 1946-1989. They are divided into subgroups for "Transportation" and "Utilities". The transportation businesses include bus, taxicab, limousine, towing, moving and storage, delivery, trucking, and other motor carrier companies. The utilities include gas, water, sewer, power and light, telephone, and telegraph companies.

The reports of transportation (motor carrier) companies contain data on officers, revenues, expenses, assets, property and equipment, liabilities and equity/capital, tonnage, mileage, and depreciation.

Information found in the reports of utilities includes: names of company officers, income and earned surplus, debits and credits, revenues and expenses, capital stock, operating expenses, compensation of employees, depreciation, notes and accounts payable, and plants.

The earlier records are mostly annual and monthly reports of railroads, telephone, and telegraph companies. Among the railroads reporting were: the Central Pacific, Southern Pacific, Union Pacific and its leased lines, Western Pacific, Virginia & Truckee, Tonopah & Tidewater,

and Northern Nevada. There are also railroad accident reports and reports from railroad-related enterprises such as the Pullman Company and express agencies.

The reports of the railroads contain information about officers of the corporation, assets and liabilities, road and equipment property, reserve funds, securities, investments, funded debt, depreciation, operating revenues and expenses.

Other than reports, there are bound volumes (35100301 - 35100304) of: Minutes of Meetings, January 28, 1935 to January 10, 1950; Index to Register of Actions, 1935-1939; Register of Actions, 1935-1939; Opinions and Orders, 1935-1939. These records cover the complaints heard and acted upon by the Commission. A volume of incoming and outgoing Railroad Commission correspondence, 1914-1916, is found in box 0050.

Federal agencies with which the Public Service Commission dealt are the Interstate Commerce Commission, Federal Power Commission, Federal Communications Commission, Department of Transportation. But little if anything relating to these agencies are in the records.

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Related Records in the National Archives

Record Group 134. Records of the Interstate Commerce Commission.

Notes

. The Commission's Sixth Annual Report (1913) declared that the case was "by far the most important one that this Commission has ever had" (p. 6).

. Later, the documents were called "certificates of public convenience and necessity."