

**EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 2-03**

**THE OFFICE OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS**

**WHEREAS**, Philadelphia residents have all too often been subjected to unfair or abusive practices by unscrupulous businesses and contractors; and

**WHEREAS**, extremely high automobile insurance rates are a significant problem to Philadelphia's residents; and

**WHEREAS**, predatory lenders are charging exorbitant fees and interest rates and are persuading Philadelphia residents to incur mortgage debt in excess of their needs or ability to pay, often through fraudulent means; and

**WHEREAS**, despite the legal protections for consumers set forth in federal, Commonwealth and Philadelphia law, consumers are often unable to find an appropriate means of redress for consumer abuse that occurs in the City; and

**WHEREAS**, all Philadelphians would benefit from a new focus of consumer advocacy and a central clearinghouse for the receipt, investigation and referral to appropriate law enforcement bodies of complaints of consumer abuse;

**WHEREAS**, Rising utility rates and cable costs, rent to own retailers, check cashing operations and unfair lending practices adversely affect Philadelphia consumers.

**NOW, THEREFORE**, I, John F. Street, by the power vested in me as the Mayor of the City of Philadelphia, do hereby order as follows:

**Section 1. Establishment Of The Office Of Consumer Affairs.**

The Office of Consumer Affairs ("OCA") is hereby established in the Mayor's Office. The Office of Consumer Affairs shall be headed by the Director of Consumer Affairs, who shall report to the Mayor.

**Section 2. Responsibilities.**

The responsibilities of the Office of Consumer Affairs are to:

A. Receive complaints of consumer abuse or unfair commercial practices within the City and, with the assistance of the Law Department, investigate such complaints.

B. Work with the Law Department to determine when to refer matters under investigation, as appropriate, to the District Attorney, the Commonwealth Attorney General, the United States Attorney, a legal services organization, or the Philadelphia Bar Association for further referral to private counsel.

C. Make determinations on behalf of the City on matters relating to complaints of consumer abuse when necessary or as requested by the Mayor.

D. Upon approval of the Law Department, and with assistance from that Department, intervene in legal proceedings for the establishment or approval of changes in insurance rates or other administrative proceedings.

E. Study issues related to insurance rates, utility rates and consumer prices and practices in Philadelphia, prepare reports based on such investigations and make recommendations to the Mayor regarding its findings, including proposals for local, state or federal legislation.

F. The Automobile Insurance Task Force established pursuant to Executive Order # 2-02 shall report to the OCA.

G. Provide information to the public regarding consumer abuses in Philadelphia and ways in which consumers can avoid consumer abuse.

H. Explore the establishment of a mediation program to seek to resolve disputes between consumers and businesses in Philadelphia.

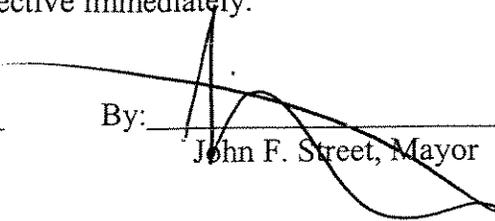
### **Section 3. Establishment of the Consumer Affairs Advisory Council**

The Consumer Affairs Advisory Council ("CAAC") is hereby established to provide advice and make recommendations to the OCA.. The CAAC shall include representatives, 5 appointed by the Mayor and 4 appointed by City Council, from organizations representing the following segments of the consumer community: senior citizens, consumer advocates, community development corporations, housing counseling organizations, legal services, and environmental advocates.

### **Section 4. Effective Date.**

This Order shall become effective immediately.

Date: MAY 13, 03

By:   
John F. Street, Mayor