

# Money

EYE ON:

## Gilbert Hamberg

By Tricia Sigafos  
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Gilbert L. Hamberg started out as a law clerk for a bankruptcy judge and then became rates attorney with the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission. By writing articles and speaking at seminars, he built a name for himself in bankruptcy and utility law. From a law office in Yardley, he represents large utility companies from all around the country in credit and collection disputes.

### Background

I used to read a lot of books back in grade school and continued to throughout my education. A teacher, noticing I liked to read, mentioned law as a career direction for those who enjoyed reading. From there, I got my bachelor of arts degree in political science from Wesleyan University in Connecticut and a Juris Doctor from Temple University Law School back in 1977. I have been practicing law ever since — 20 years now.

My last year of Temple, I was a law clerk for a bankruptcy judge. When I graduated, I was given a chance to work for the Pennsylvania PUC in the rates division. I, as well as my advisers, thought it would be a good opportunity. I would be in the courtroom and get litigation experience, which you don't usually get when you join up with firms.

As a rates attorney, my job was to represent utilities and/or customers,

### At a glance

Gilbert L. Hamberg  
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to help establish just rates. Sometimes I was opposing the utilities and sometimes I was on the side of the utilities.

### Starting his own practice

I was giving a speech to Pennsylvania Electric. After the seminar, one of the utilities asked me if I would be able to pick up another utility company and then represent them both in an upcoming case. So I started by representing two utility companies. From there, I decided to make a go of it. Now I have picked up my 30th utility. I represent utility companies from all over the United States such as Pacific Gas, Bell South and GTE. In Pennsylvania, I represent companies like Equitable Gas.

### Running his practice

I am my own secretary, receptionist, bookkeeper, and paralegal. I do it all. Which means no vacations. I don't have a support staff, like I used to at PUC.

Most utility companies usually choose large corporate firms, but I have created a nice niche. They know of me and have learned that I can do the work quicker and cheaper than large firms. And most large bankruptcy cases are filed in Delaware or New York. Therefore my firm has a great location, being geographically about halfway between both places.

I have built up my name through the articles I've written, papers like



Harry Sircely/Courier Times

Gilbert L. Hamberg has carved out a niche in the legal profession as an attorney for utility companies.

the Legal Intelligencer, Electricity Journal, Public Utilities Fortnightly. I also speak at seminars. In one week, I gave a speech in Myrtle Beach and two in Atlanta.

### A sample case

A case I just had was against Montgomery Ward, which filed for bankruptcy. I represented two utility companies who were trying to get security deposits and the right to shut off service. Usually I can settle, but in this case Montgomery Ward refused. We went to court, but after

the opening statements the judge suggested he might side with the utilities. They then decided to settle. For one of my companies I ended up getting 100 percent of their claim and 75 percent for the other.

### Plans for his practice

Right now I am keeping up with it on my own. I am a very conservative lawyer. I will make sure I am financially solid before expanding. In the long term, yes I plan on expanding. But for short term everything is status quo.