

By: Larson

H.B. No. 3543

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to bill payment assistance for certain utility bills after a disaster.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1. Subchapter 2, Chapter 39, Utilities Code, is amended by adding Section 39.9031 to read as follows:

Sec. 39.9031. DISASTER BILL PAYMENT ASSISTANCE. (a) The comptroller shall establish a program to provide bill payment assistance using state money appropriated for that purpose to retail customers of municipally owned utilities, electric cooperatives, and retail electric providers in the ERCOT power region.

(b) The program must:

(1) provide assistance only for unusually high bills for services provided after February 13, 2021, and before February 19, 2021;

(2) establish criteria for determining whether a bill is unusually high;

(3) allow a customer to apply for assistance to the municipally owned utility, electric cooperative, or retail electric provider that served the customer during the time period in Subdivision (1); and

(4) require a municipally owned utility, electric cooperative, or retail electric provider that receives an

1 application under Subdivision (3) to:

2 (A) submit the application to the comptroller;

3 and

4 (B) provide to the customer any assistance sent  
5 by the comptroller to the utility, cooperative, or provider in  
6 response to the application.

7 (c) The comptroller shall consult with the commission when  
8 adopting any rules needed to implement this section.

9 (d) The commission may enforce a rule adopted by the  
10 comptroller to implement this section.

11 SECTION 2. This Act takes effect September 1, 2021.