

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

H.B. 4644  
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State Affairs  
Committee Report (Unamended)

### **BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE**

Currently, a natural gas utility company is required to post notifications for rate increases in local newspapers for four consecutive weeks. The gas utility can provide notice by U.S. Postal Service to each customer or by inserting it in the monthly bill for customers residing in municipalities with a population of less than 2,500.

In recent years, the development of the Internet has led to an ever increasing number of customers handling their billing and payment by electronic communication.

H.B. 4644 allows small-town customers to receive an electronic communication of a proposed rate increase from the natural gas utility company at the customers' request. This modernization reduces the expense of providing rate increase notifications to customers, while also providing such notice to customers in an expedited manner. The bill does not directly impact customers who choose not to utilize electronic communication.

### **RULEMAKING AUTHORITY**

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

### **ANALYSIS**

H.B. 4644 amends provisions of the Utilities Code requiring a gas utility to provide public notice of a proposed rate increase, to allow the utility, as an additional alternative to newspaper publication, to give notice to the public in an area outside the affected municipality or in a municipality with a population of less than 2,500 by sending the notice on request by electronic communication to each directly affected customer who has provided the utility with the necessary contact information.

### **EFFECTIVE DATE**

September 1, 2009.