

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

S.B. 1219  
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State Affairs  
Committee Report (Unamended)

### **BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE**

The intended purpose of the Power to Choose website is to promote customer choice in the competitive markets by enabling customers to shop for competitive rates. Interested parties assert that the Public Utility Commission of Texas (PUC) has an obligation to provide information to the public regarding the deregulation of the retail electric market, but that the Power to Choose website, managed by the PUC for such purpose, is not user-friendly and does not reflect the complex nature of the competitive market of retail choices for electricity. S.B. 1219 seeks to require the PUC to publish and maintain the Power to Choose website so that it is more accessible, easier to use, and contains more useful information beyond price offers.

### **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**

S.B. 1219 amends the Utilities Code to require the Public Utility Commission of Texas (PUC), not later than September 1, 2012, to publish and maintain a website that allows customers to view competitive offers from retail electric providers. The bill requires the website to enable a user to search by zip code offers available to a residential customer in the user's service area. The bill authorizes a retail electric provider to post offers available to residential customers on the website, but specifies that such a provider is not required to do so. The bill sets out the minimum features and information the website is required to include.

S.B. 1219 requires the PUC to establish a project to implement the Texas electric choice website and to create a working committee to provide input on the implementation of the website that is composed of members of PUC staff, experts in user-centered web design, experts in consumer-choice web design, retail electric providers, consumer advocates, and representatives of various categories of potential users of the redesigned website, including people with disabilities and low-income customers. The bill requires the PUC to establish protocols relating to the frequency with which information posted on the website is updated and to consult and cooperate with other state agencies in the website design, both for content and usability, including agencies providing low-income consumer assistance and energy efficiency assistance and the interagency coordinating group for faith-based and community-based initiatives.

S.B. 1219 changes from September 1, 2011, to September 1, 2013, the expiration date for provisions of law requiring a retail electric provider to include on each residential customer's bill a specified notice regarding customer choice information.

S.B. 1219 authorizes the PUC to accept funds from any source, including gifts, grants, or donations, for implementation of the bill's provisions. The bill prohibits the PUC from incorporating a preference of information displayed directly or indirectly in favor of any funding source and specifies that no entity will be required to contribute funds to have information

posted on the site. The bill makes implementation of the bill's provisions contingent on a finding by the PUC that complete funding exists or is likely to exist to carry out its provisions. The bill sets out legislative findings.

**EFFECTIVE DATE**

September 1, 2011.