

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 2391
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State Affairs
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

According to interested parties, some military veterans have a significantly decreased ability to regulate body temperature because of severe burns received in combat and consequently may use more electricity, which is reflected in the higher utility bills they receive from their respective retail electric providers. H.B. 2391 seeks to establish a bill payment assistance program to help these veterans offset the extra electricity costs they incur.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Public Utilities Commission in SECTION 3 of this bill.

ANALYSIS

H.B. 2391 amends the Government Code to establish that the first lien against the revenue of a municipally owned utility system, regardless of the municipality's population size, that secures the payment of public securities issued or obligations incurred for municipal utilities applies to the funding as a necessary operations expense of a bill payment assistance program for utility system customers who are military veterans and who have significantly decreased abilities to regulate their bodies' core temperatures because of severe burns received in combat.

H.B. 2391 amends the Utilities Code to authorize an electric utility located in a portion of Texas not subject to retail competition to establish a bill payment assistance program for a customer who is a military veteran and who a medical doctor certifies has a significantly decreased ability to regulate the individual's body temperature because of severe burns received in combat. The bill requires a regulatory authority to allow as a cost or expense a cost or expense of the bill payment assistance program. The bill establishes that the electric utility is entitled to fully recover all costs and expenses related to the bill payment assistance program, to defer each cost or expense related to the bill payment assistance program not explicitly included in base rates, and to apply carrying charges at the utility's weighted average cost of capital to the extent related to the bill payment assistance program.

H.B. 2391 authorizes a retail electric provider to establish a bill payment assistance program for a customer who is a military veteran and who a medical doctor certifies has a significantly decreased ability to regulate the individual's body temperature because of severe burns received in combat. The bill requires the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) to compile a list of such programs that are available from retail electric providers and to publish the list on the PUC's Internet website. The bill requires the Office of the Public Utility Counsel to provide a link to the list on the office's Internet website. The bill requires a retail electric provider to provide to the PUC information necessary to compile the list in the form, manner, and frequency the PUC requires by rule.

H.B. 2391 authorizes the board of directors of an electric cooperative or the governing body of a municipally owned utility to establish a bill payment assistance program for a customer who is a

military veteran and who a medical doctor certifies has a significantly decreased ability to regulate the individual's body temperature because of severe burns received in combat. The bill specifies that the costs of the bill payment assistance program are considered a necessary operations expense. The bill authorizes the board of directors of an electric cooperative or the governing body of a municipally owned utility to determine the method of funding the bill payment assistance program.

EFFECTIVE DATE

On passage, or, if the bill does not receive the necessary vote, September 1, 2013.