

By: Van de Putte, et al.
(Menendez)

S.B. No. 981

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to electric utility bill payment assistance programs for certain veterans burned in combat.

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

SECTION 1. Section 36.061, Utilities Code, is amended by adding Subsection (c) to read as follows:

(c) An electric utility located in a portion of this state not subject to retail competition may establish a bill payment assistance program for a customer who is a military veteran who a medical doctor certifies has a significantly decreased ability to regulate the individual's body temperature because of severe burns received in combat. A regulatory authority shall allow as a cost or expense a cost or expense of the bill payment assistance program. The electric utility is entitled to:

(1) fully recover all costs and expenses related to the bill payment assistance program;

(2) defer each cost or expense related to the bill payment assistance program not explicitly included in base rates; and

(3) apply carrying charges at the utility's weighted average cost of capital to the extent related to the bill payment assistance program.

SECTION 2. Subchapter H, Chapter 39, Utilities Code, is amended by adding Section 39.359 to read as follows:

Sec. 39.359. BILL PAYMENT ASSISTANCE FOR BURNED VETERANS.

(a) A retail electric provider may establish a bill payment assistance program for a customer who is a military veteran who a medical doctor certifies has a significantly decreased ability to regulate the individual's body temperature because of severe burns received in combat.

(b) The commission shall compile a list of programs described by Subsection (a) that are available from retail electric providers. The commission shall publish the list on the commission's Internet website and the office shall provide on the office's Internet website a link to the list.

(c) A retail electric provider shall provide to the commission information necessary to compile the list in the form, manner, and frequency the commission by rule requires.

SECTION 3. Chapter 182, Utilities Code, is amended by adding Subchapter D to read as follows:

SUBCHAPTER D. BILL PAYMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR BURNED VETERANS

Sec. 182.201. DEFINITIONS. In this subchapter, "electric cooperative" and "municipally owned utility" have the meanings assigned by Section 11.003.

Sec. 182.202. BURNED VETERANS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM. (a) The board of directors of an electric cooperative or the governing body of a municipally owned utility may establish a bill payment assistance program for a customer who is a military veteran who a medical doctor certifies has a significantly decreased ability to regulate the individual's body temperature because of severe burns received in combat.

1 (b) The costs of a bill payment assistance program
2 established under Subsection (a) are considered a necessary
3 operations expense.

4 (c) The board of directors of an electric cooperative or the
5 governing body of a municipally owned utility may determine the
6 method to fund a bill payment assistance program established under
7 Subsection (a).

8 SECTION 4. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives
9 a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as
10 provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this
11 Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this
12 Act takes effect September 1, 2013.