

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 1083
By: Perez
Natural Resources
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Interested parties note that at times senior citizens, many of whom live on fixed incomes, may have difficulty paying a utility bill and may lose utility service and experience a reduced quality of life as a result. H.B. 1083 seeks to address this issue by providing for certain reduced water utility rates for elderly customers.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE IMPACT

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly create a criminal offense, increase the punishment for an existing criminal offense or category of offenses, or change the eligibility of a person for community supervision, parole, or mandatory supervision.

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. 1083 amends the Water Code to authorize a regulatory authority, in establishing a utility's rates, to authorize the utility to establish reduced rates for a minimal level of service to be provided solely to a class of elderly customers to ensure that those customers receive that level of service at more affordable rates. The bill requires the regulatory authority to allow a utility to establish a fund to receive donations to recover the costs of providing the reduced rates and prohibits a utility from recovering those costs through charges to the utility's other customer classes.

H.B. 1083 specifies that, for purposes of statutory provisions prohibiting unreasonable preference or prejudice as to water and sewer rates or services, a reduced rate established for a class of elderly customers does not make or grant an unreasonable preference or advantage to any corporation or person, subject a corporation or person to an unreasonable prejudice or disadvantage, or constitute an unreasonable difference as to rates of service between classes of service.

H.B. 1083 applies only to proceedings before a regulatory authority regarding water utility rates concerning an application filed on or after January 1, 2018, and requires the Public Utility Commission of Texas and other regulatory authorities to adopt rules as necessary to implement the bill's provisions not later than December 31, 2017.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2017.