

1219

2013-2014 Regular Sessions

I N   S E N A T E

(PREFILED)

January 9, 2013

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Introduced by Sen. PERKINS -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Energy and Telecommunications

AN ACT to amend the public service law, in relation to notification to utility customers of their right to direct access to public service commission complaint procedures without arbitration or court proceedings

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK, REPRESENTED IN SENATE AND ASSEMBLY, DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

1     Section 1. Legislative findings and intent. The legislature hereby  
2 finds that some providers of residential utility service have created  
3 barriers to prompt resolution of customer complaints through the  
4 complaint adjudication functions of the public service commission. Some  
5 providers of electric service refer customers to private arbitration or  
6 judicial adjudication of utility customer complaints, contrary to the  
7 primary jurisdiction of the public service commission, creating barriers  
8 to the efficient and uniform enforcement and administration of the Home  
9 Energy Fair Practices Act. The legislature further finds that it is in  
10 the public interest to require the public service commission to notify  
11 all residential utility customers of their right to file complaints  
12 directly with the public service commission for administrative determi-  
13 nation without pursuing third party arbitration or judicial relief.

14     S 2. Subdivision 1 of section 43 of the public service law, as added  
15 by chapter 713 of the laws of 1981, is amended to read as follows:

16     1. The commission shall maintain regulations for the handling of resi-  
17 dential customer complaints, which at a minimum shall require that each  
18 utility or municipality: (a) maintain procedures for prompt investi-  
19 gation of any complaint on a bill for gas or electric service rendered  
20 or a deposit required and for prompt reporting to the complainant of the  
21 result of such investigation. If such report is made orally, the utili-

EXPLANATION--Matter in *ITALICS* (underscored) is new; matter in brackets [ ] is old law to be omitted.

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1 ty corporation or municipality shall offer the complainant upon a writ-  
2 ten request the opportunity to receive the report in writing; (b) inform  
3 any complainant whose complaint is resolved in favor of the utility  
4 corporation or municipality, in whole or in part, of the availability of  
5 the commission's complaint handling procedures; (c) refrain from termi-  
6 nating service for nonpayment so long as a complaint is pending before a  
7 utility, municipality or the commission and for fifteen days thereafter,  
8 or for such period as the commission for good cause shall establish;  
9 provided however, that as a condition of continued service during the  
10 pendency of any such dispute, a customer shall pay the undisputed  
11 portions of any bill for service including bills for current usage, or  
12 such amounts as the commission determines reasonably reflect the cost of  
13 usage to such customer; [and] (d) refrain from treating the disputed  
14 portion of any bill as late during the pendency of any complaint before  
15 the utility or municipality; AND (E) NOTIFY ALL RESIDENTIAL CUSTOMERS  
16 ANNUALLY, INCLUDING SUBMETERED CUSTOMERS, THAT THE COMPLAINT HANDLING  
17 PROCEDURES OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION CAN BE INVOKED TO OBTAIN AN  
18 ADMINISTRATIVE DETERMINATION OF COMPLAINTS REGARDING UTILITY SERVICE BY  
19 TELEPHONE CALL, LETTER, ONLINE COMPLAINT FORM, OR VISIT TO AN OFFICE OF  
20 THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION.

21 S 3. This act shall take effect on the ninetieth day after it shall  
22 have become a law.