

# STATE OF NEW YORK

3034

2021-2022 Regular Sessions

## IN SENATE

January 27, 2021

Introduced by Sen. PARKER -- 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 utility intervenor reimbursement; and to amend the state finance law, in relation to establishing the utility intervenor account

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

1 Section 1. The public service law is amended by adding a new section  
2 24-c to read as follows:

3 § 24-c. Utility intervenor reimbursement. 1. As used in this  
4 section, the following terms shall have the following meanings:

5 (a) "Compensation" means payment from the utility intervenor account  
6 fund established by section ninety-seven-uuuu of the state finance law,  
7 for all or part, as determined by the department, of reasonable advo-  
8 cate's fees, reasonable expert witness fees, and other reasonable costs  
9 for preparation and participation in a proceeding.

10 (b) "Participant" means a group of persons that apply jointly for an  
11 award of compensation under this section and who represent the interests  
12 of a significant number of residential or small business customers, or a  
13 not-for-profit organization in this state authorized pursuant to its  
14 articles of incorporation or bylaws to represent the interests of resi-  
15 dential or small business utility customers. For purposes of this  
16 section, a participant does not include a non-profit organization or  
17 other organization whose principal interests are the welfare of a public  
18 utility or its investors or employees, or the welfare of one or more  
19 businesses or industries which receive utility service ordinarily and  
20 primarily for use in connection with the profit-seeking manufacture,  
21 sale, or distribution of goods or services.

22 (c) "Other reasonable costs" means reasonable out-of-pocket expenses  
23 directly incurred by a participant that are directly related to the

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

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1 contentions or recommendations made by the participant that resulted in  
2 a substantial contribution.

3 (d) "Party" means any interested party, respondent public utility, or  
4 commission staff in a hearing or proceeding.

5 (e) "Proceeding" means a complaint, or investigation, rulemaking, or  
6 other formal proceeding before the commission, or alternative dispute  
7 resolution procedures in lieu of formal proceedings as may be sponsored  
8 or endorsed by the commission, provided however such proceedings shall  
9 be limited to those arising under and proceeding pursuant to the follow-  
10 ing articles of this chapter: (1) the regulation of the price of gas and  
11 electricity, pursuant to article four of this chapter; (2) the regu-  
12 lation of the price of steam, pursuant to article four-A of this chap-  
13 ter; (3) the submetering, remetering or resale of electricity to resi-  
14 dential premises, pursuant to sections sixty-five and sixty-six of this  
15 chapter, and pursuant to regulations regarding the submetering, remeter-  
16 ing, or resale of electricity adopted by the commission; and (4) such  
17 sections of this chapter as are applicable to a proceeding in which the  
18 commission makes a finding on the record that the public interest  
19 requires the reimbursement of utility intervenor fees pursuant to this  
20 section.

21 (f) "Significant financial hardship" means that the participant will  
22 be unable to afford, without undue hardship, to pay the costs of effec-  
23 tive participation, including advocate's fees, expert witness fees, and  
24 other reasonable costs of participation.

25 (g) "Small business" means a business with a gross annual revenue of  
26 two hundred fifty thousand dollars or less.

27 (h) "Substantial contribution" means that, in the judgment of the  
28 department, the participant's application may substantially assist the  
29 commission in making its decision because the decision may adopt in  
30 whole or in part one or more factual contentions, legal contentions, or  
31 specific policy or procedural recommendations that will be presented by  
32 the participant.

33 2. A participant may apply for an award of compensation under this  
34 section in a proceeding in which such participant has sought active  
35 party status as defined by the department. The department shall deter-  
36 mine appropriate procedures for accepting and responding to such appli-  
37 cations. At the time of application, such participant shall serve on  
38 every party to the proceeding notice of intent to apply for an award of  
39 compensation.

40 An application shall include:

41 (a) A statement of the nature and extent and the factual and legal  
42 basis of the participant's planned participation in the proceeding as  
43 far as it is possible to describe such participation with reasonable  
44 specificity at the time the application is filed.

45 (b) At minimum, a reasonably detailed description of anticipated advo-  
46 cates and expert witness fees and other costs of preparation and partic-  
47 ipation that the participant expects to request as compensation.

48 (c) If participation or intervention will impose a significant finan-  
49 cial hardship and the participant seeks payment in advance to an award  
50 of compensation in order to initiate, continue or complete participation  
51 in the hearing or proceeding, such participant must include evidence of  
52 such significant financial hardship in its application.

53 (d) Any other requirements as required by the department.

54 3. (a) Within thirty days after the filing of an application the  
55 department shall issue a decision that determines whether or not the  
56 participant may make a substantial contribution to the final decision in

1 the hearing or proceeding. If the department finds that the participant  
2 requesting compensation may make a substantial contribution, the depart-  
3 ment shall describe this substantial contribution and determine the  
4 amount of compensation to be paid pursuant to subdivision four of this  
5 section.

6 (b) Notwithstanding subdivision four of this section, if the depart-  
7 ment finds that the participant has a significant financial hardship,  
8 the department may direct the public utility or utilities subject to the  
9 proceeding to pay all or part of the compensation to the department to  
10 be provided to the participant prior to the end of the proceeding. In  
11 the event that the participant discontinues its participation in the  
12 proceeding without the consent of the department, the department shall  
13 be entitled to, in whole or in part, recover any payments made to such  
14 participant to be refunded to the public utility or utilities that  
15 provided such payment.

16 (c) The computation of compensation pursuant to paragraph (a) of this  
17 subdivision shall take into consideration the market rates paid to  
18 persons of comparable training and experience who offer similar  
19 services. The compensation awarded may not, in any case, exceed the  
20 comparable market rate for services paid by the department or the public  
21 utility, whichever is greater, to persons of comparable training and  
22 experience who are offering similar services.

23 (d) Any compensation awarded to a participant and not used by such  
24 participant shall be returned to the department for refund to the public  
25 utility or utilities that provided such payment.

26 (e) The department shall require that participants seeking payment  
27 maintain an itemized record of all expenditures incurred as a result of  
28 such proceeding.

29 (i) The department may use the itemized record of expenses to verify  
30 the claim of financial hardship by a participant seeking payment pursu-  
31 ant to paragraph (c) of subdivision two of this section.

32 (ii) The department may use the record of expenditures in determining,  
33 after the completion of a proceeding, if any unused funds remain.

34 (iii) The department shall preserve the confidentiality of the partic-  
35 ipant's records in making any audit or determining the availability of  
36 funds after the completion of a proceeding.

37 (f) In the event that the department finds that two or more partic-  
38 ipants' applications have substantially similar interests, the depart-  
39 ment may require such participants to apply jointly in order to receive  
40 compensation.

41 4. Any compensation pursuant to this section shall be paid at the  
42 conclusion of the proceeding by the public utility or utilities subject  
43 to the proceeding within thirty days. Such compensation shall be remit-  
44 ted to the department which shall then remit such compensation to the  
45 participant.

46 5. The department shall deny any award to any participant who attempts  
47 to delay or obstruct the orderly and timely fulfillment of the depart-  
48 ment's responsibilities.

49 § 2. The state finance law is amended by adding a new section 97-uuuu  
50 to read as follows:

51 § 97-uuuu. Utility intervenor account. 1. There is hereby established  
52 in the joint custody of the state comptroller and the commissioner of  
53 taxation and finance a fund to be known as the utility intervenor  
54 account.

1 2. Such account shall consist of all utility intervenor reimbursement  
2 monies received from utilities pursuant to section twenty-four-c of the  
3 public service law.

4 § 3. This act shall take effect on the thirtieth day after it shall  
5 have become a law.