

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 5290

As Passed House:

March 30, 2009

Title: An act relating to requests made by a party concerning gas or electrical company discounts for low-income senior customers and low-income customers.

Brief Description: Concerning requests made by a party relating to gas or electrical company discounts for low-income senior customers and low-income customers.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Environment, Water & Energy (originally sponsored by Senators Franklin, Brown, Fraser, Kauffman, McAuliffe, Shin, Murray, Eide, Keiser, Berkey and Regala).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Technology, Energy & Communications: 3/11/09, 3/19/09 [DP].

Floor Activity

Passed House: 3/30/09, 97-0.

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Allows other parties to a general rate case proceeding, in addition to an electrical or gas company, to request changes to a gas or electric utility's program for low-income senior customers and low-income customers.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY, ENERGY & COMMUNICATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 14 members: Representatives McCoy, Chair; Eddy, Vice Chair; Crouse, Ranking Minority Member; Carlyle, Condotta, Finn, Hasegawa, Herrera, Hudgins, Jacks, McCune, Morris, Takko and Van De Wege.

Staff: Scott Richards (786-7156)

Background:

Utilities and Transportation Commission.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

The Utilities and Transportation Commission (UTC) regulates in the public interest the rates, services, facilities, and practices of all persons within Washington engaging in the business of supplying any utility service or commodity to the public for compensation.

Low-Income Programs.

Upon request by an electrical or gas company, the UTC may approve rates, charges, services, or physical facilities at a discount for low-income senior customers and low-income customers. Expenses and lost revenues as a result of these discounts are included in the company's cost of service and recovered in rates to other customers.

Under current law, only a gas or electric utility may initiate a request to approve or change a low-income program. The utility may make the request as part of a general rate proceeding.

Summary of Bill:

A party to a general rate case proceeding, in addition to an electrical and a gas company, may request that the UTC approve rates, charges, services, or physical facilities at a discount for low-income senior customers and low-income customers.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) The original version of this bill was not confined to a general rate case proceeding, which would have allowed anyone to ask at anytime for the UTC to review a low-income program. This created concerns about an orderly process. The current version of the bill allows people who are effected by rates to have standing to seek intervention in a general rate case proceeding. This bill opens up the process for good ideas from other sources beyond the utilities.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Dave Danner, Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission; and Seth Dawson, Washington State Association for Community Action.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.