

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5904

AS PASSED SENATE, MARCH 19, 1991

Brief Description: Extending until 1995 home heating assistance for low-income persons.

SPONSORS: Senators Thorsness, Conner and Sutherland.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY & UTILITIES

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Thorsness, Chairman; Saling, Vice Chairman; Jesernig, Nelson, Patterson, Roach, Stratton, Sutherland, and Williams.

Staff: Phil Moeller (786-7445)

Hearing Dates: March 5, 1991

BACKGROUND:

In 1990 the Legislature renewed a 1987 law that limits the ability of utilities to terminate residential space heat during the winter months. The 1987 legislation specified that customers were subject to several requirements before they could become eligible for the program. These requirements included: a verification of income; agreeing to a payment plan; applying for public and private financial assistance; and applying for weatherization assistance. Utilities were required to notify customers of the provisions of the legislation and were required to expand the option of budget billing for customers. This entire program is referred to as the "moratorium" program.

The number of citizens using the moratorium program has steadily declined. This is at least partly due to the expanded benefits of the budget billing option.

The 1990 legislation is set to expire June 30, 1991.

SUMMARY:

The program limiting winter heat termination is extended until June 30, 1995.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: none requested

TESTIMONY FOR:

This is a good program that provides a safety net for low income heat utility customers.

TESTIMONY AGAINST: None

TESTIFIED: Ron Newbry, Pacific Power (pro)