
Local Government Committee

SB 5362

Brief Description: Authorizing public utility districts to request voluntary contributions to assist low-income customers with payment of water and sewer bills.

Sponsors: Senators Chase, Prentice, White, Nelson, Kastama, Fraser, Shin, Harper, Hatfield, Conway, McAuliffe and Kohl-Welles.

<p style="text-align: center;">Brief Summary of Bill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Authorizes public utility districts to request voluntary contributions to help low-income customers pay their water and sewer bills.
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Hearing Date: 3/8/11

Staff: Miranda Leskinen (786-7291) and Ethan Moreno (786-7386).

Background:

Public utility districts (PUDs), a type of special purpose district, are created by and for the communities they serve and may provide water, electricity, conservation, and telecommunications services. Washington has 28 public utility districts that serve more than 2.2 million customers. A board of three elected commissioners manages each PUD.

Public Utility Districts, through their regular customer billings, may request voluntary contributions for the purpose of assisting qualified low-income residential customers pay their electricity bills. Funds received through voluntary contributions to the PUD's low-income customers must not reduce the amount of assistance for which low-income customers are eligible under the federally funded energy assistance programs administered by the Department of Commerce (COM) within the district's service area. Voluntary contributions are managed and disbursed by one of the following entities:

- the district;
- the grantee of the COM which administers federally funded energy assistance programs for the state in the district's service area; or

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- a charitable organization within the district's service area.

The PUD, when possible, is paid on behalf of the customer by the grantee or the charitable organization. When direct vendor payment is not possible, a check is issued jointly payable to the customer and the PUD.

Summary of Bill:

Public utility districts, through their regular customer billings, may request voluntary contributions to assist qualified low-income residential customers of the district pay their water, sewer, or electricity bills. Additionally, references to the Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development are changed to the Department of Commerce.

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.