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H.668

Introduced by Representatives Stebbins of Burlington, Cordes of Lincoln,
Torre of Moretown, Anthony of Barre City, Campbell of St.
Johnsbury, Cole of Hartford, Headrick of Burlington, Hyman of
South Burlington, Leavitt of Grand Isle, Logan of Burlington,
McGill of Bridport, Mrowicki of Putney, Mulvaney-Stanak of
Burlington, Pouech of Hinesburg, Sims of Craftsbury,
Templeman of Brownington, and Troiano of Stannard

Referred to Committee on

Date:

Subject: Utilities; electric; rates; low-income ratepayers

Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to require the
Public Utility Commission to propose in the form of draft legislation a low-
income electric ratepayer protection program that is funded on a statewide
basis.

An act relating to the Low-Income Electric Ratepayer Protection Act

It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

Sec. 1. SHORT TITLE

This act shall be known as the “Low-Income Electric Ratepayer Act.”

1 Sec. 2. 30 V.S.A. § 209c is amended to read:

2 § 209c. ELECTRICITY AFFORDABILITY PROGRAM

3 (a) The Public Utility Commission shall design a new proposed ~~electricity~~
4 ~~affordability~~ low-income electric ratepayer protection program in the form of
5 draft legislation. The program shall be developed with the aid of an electricity
6 affordability program collaborative. The collaborative, composed of
7 representatives from the electric utilities, residential customers, consumer
8 representatives, low-income program representatives, representatives from
9 programs for elders, the Department of Public Service, the Agency of Human
10 Services, and other stakeholders identified by the Commission, shall aid in the
11 development of an electricity affordability program, as well as requirements
12 for the implementation and funding of the program. The proposed electricity
13 affordability program will be presented to the Vermont General Assembly in
14 the form of draft legislation for consideration in January ~~2007~~ 2025.

15 (b) The proposed ~~electricity affordability~~ low-income electric ratepayer
16 protection program shall provide assistance in the payment of electricity bills
17 for eligible low-income residential customers served by electric companies
18 subject to the jurisdiction of the Commission so that no household at or below
19 60 percent of State median income pays more than 10 percent of monthly
20 income on electricity if the household heats with electricity and not more than
21 six percent if the household does not heat with electricity.

1 (c) ~~In developing the electricity affordability program, the Commission~~
2 ~~shall review the successes and administrative burdens of similar programs in~~
3 ~~operation in other states and consider the following goals, which shall be~~
4 ~~afforded equal weight in formulating the program~~ The program shall:

5 (1) ~~the need to provide payment assistance to low income customers at~~
6 ~~and below 150 percent of the federal poverty level~~ be administered on a
7 ~~statewide basis by a State agency or an entity supervised by the Commission;~~

8 (2) use the need for automatic screening and enrollment methods of
9 eligible customers by means of information obtained from existing means-
10 tested financial assistance programs administered by other Vermont agencies
11 such as food stamps, Medicaid, LIHEAP, or TANF; ~~and~~

12 (3) ~~the need to design a program that is funded by all customer classes~~
13 ~~in an equitable and reasonable manner and that results in the reimbursement of~~
14 ~~net incremental costs incurred by electric utilities to implement the program,~~
15 ~~taking into consideration the benefits as well as the costs~~ be funded on a
16 ~~statewide basis; and~~

17 (4) include arrearage forgiveness.

18 (d) The Commission shall consider alternative means of funding the
19 ~~program, including a voluntary additional monthly payment option available to~~
20 all ratepayers, a surcharge on non-low-income ratepayers that use high

1 volumes of electricity, and any other funding mechanism deemed appropriate
2 by the Commission.

3 Sec. 3. REPEAL

4 30 V.S.A. § 218(e) is repealed.

5 Sec. 4. EFFECTIVE DATE

6 This act shall take effect on passage.