

House Bill 528

By: Representatives Drenner of the 85th and Henson of the 86th

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

1 To amend Chapter 1 of Title 46 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to the
2 general provisions relative to public utilities, so as to provide for preferred payment plans for
3 utility customers on fixed incomes; to provide for definitions; to provide for related matters;
4 to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

5 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

6 style="text-align:center">**SECTION 1.**

7 Chapter 1 of Title 46 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to the general
8 provisions relative to public utilities, is amended by adding a new Code section to read as
9 follows:

10 "46-1-6.

11 (a) As used in this Code section, the term:

12 (1) 'Eligible customer' means any residential customer of a public utility who is
13 receiving:

14 (A) Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or Aid to the Aged, Blind, and
15 Disabled (AABD);

16 (B) Benefits from general assistance or supplemental security income;

17 (C) Income from social security benefits or veterans benefits; or

18 (D) Unemployment compensation benefits.

19 (2) 'Public utility' means any electric utility, gas company, or telephone company.

20 (b) An eligible customer who is billed monthly by a public utility and who can
21 demonstrate that his or her primary source of income is derived from a benefit that is
22 received during the ten-day period after the eligible customer's regular due date for a utility
23 bill from such public utility shall be entitled to a preferred payment date to enable the
24 eligible customer to submit timely payments.

25 (c) When an eligible customer pays a bill to a public utility late twice in a 12 month
26 period, the public utility shall notify the eligible customer of the availability of a preferred

27 payment date. The public utility shall make a record on the eligible customer's account of
28 the notification, and notification shall be made by:

29 (1) Message included in the eligible customer's bill;

30 (2) Separate written communication; or

31 (3) Verbal communication.

32 (d) The public utility shall inform an eligible customer of the following options from
33 which the eligible customer may choose:

34 (1) Enter into a budget payment plan with a preferred payment date that is not more than
35 ten days after the eligible customer's regular billing date and is agreed upon by the
36 eligible customer and the public utility; or

37 (2) Establish a preferred payment date that shall not be more than ten days after the
38 eligible customer's regular billing date.

39 (e) If the eligible customer fails to pay on or before the preferred payment date more than
40 four times in a 12 month period, the public utility may remove the eligible customer's
41 account from the preferred payment date and return the eligible customer to the regular bill
42 due date. After the removal of an eligible customer's account from a preferred payment
43 plan, the public utility shall not be obliged to offer the preferred payment date to that same
44 customer for a period of 12 months."

45 **SECTION 2.**

46 All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.