

1 H.242

2 Introduced by Representative Brennan of Colchester

3 Referred to Committee on

4 Date:

5 Subject: Public service; energy; energy efficiency charge; assistance program
6 fees; electric discount program fees

7 Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to require energy
8 efficiency charges against fuel ratepayers, Low Income Assistance Program
9 fees assessed against natural gas ratepayers, and electric discount program fees
10 to be voluntary. This bill also requires that notice be provided to ratepayers of
11 how to withdraw from the proposed voluntary charges.

12 An act relating to making energy efficiency charges, energy assistance
13 program fees, and electric discount program fees voluntary

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

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

16 § 209. JURISDICTION; GENERAL SCOPE

17 * * *

18 (3) Energy efficiency charge; regulated fuels. In addition to its existing
19 authority, the Commission may establish by order or rule a voluntary,
20 volumetric charge to customers for the support of energy efficiency programs

1 that meet the requirements of section 218c of this title, with due consideration
2 to the State's energy policy under section 202a of this title and to its energy
3 and economic policy interests under section 218e of this title to maintain and
4 enhance the State's economic vitality. The charge shall be known as the
5 energy efficiency charge, shall be shown separately on each customer's bill,
6 and shall be paid to a fund administrator appointed by the Commission and
7 deposited into the Electric Efficiency Fund. When such a charge is shown,
8 notice as to how to obtain information about energy efficiency programs
9 approved under this section and how a customer may withdraw from the
10 voluntary charge shall be provided in a clear and discernible manner directed
11 by the Commission. This notice shall include, at a minimum, a toll-free
12 telephone number; and, to the extent feasible, shall be on the customer's bill
13 and near the energy efficiency charge.

14 * * *

15 Sec. 2. 33 V.S.A. § 2607 is amended to read:

16 § 2607. PAYMENTS TO FUEL SUPPLIERS

17 * * *

18 (g)(1) The Public Utility Commission shall require natural gas suppliers
19 subject to regulation under 30 V.S.A. § 203 to provide a discount program to
20 customers with incomes no greater than 200 percent of the federal poverty
21 level or who meet the Department for Children and Families' means test of

1 eligibility for LIHEAP crisis fuel assistance. Eligibility for the discount shall
2 be verified by the Department for Children and Families.

3 * * *

4 (4) Any assistance program fee assessed to ineligible ratepayers to offset
5 the cost of the discount program under this section shall be voluntary and at the
6 discretion of the ratepayer. When such a charge is shown on a ratepayer's bill,
7 notice as to how to obtain information about the Low Income Assistance
8 Program approved under this section and how a customer may withdraw from
9 the voluntary charge shall be provided in a clear and discernible manner. This
10 notice shall include, at a minimum, a toll-free telephone number and, to the
11 extent feasible, shall be on the customer's bill and near the assistance program
12 fee charge.

13 * * *

14 Sec. 3. 30 V.S.A. § 218 is amended to read:

15 § 218. JURISDICTION OVER CHARGES AND RATES

16 * * *

17 (e) Notwithstanding any other provisions of this section, the Commission,
18 on its own motion or upon petition of any person, may issue an order
19 approving a rate schedule, tariff, agreement, contract, or settlement that
20 provides reduced rates for low-income electric utility consumers better to
21 assure affordability. For the purposes of this subsection, "low-income electric

1 utility consumer” means a customer who has a household income at or below
2 150 percent of the current federal poverty level. When considering whether to
3 approve a rate schedule, tariff, agreement, contract, or settlement for low-
4 income electric utility consumers, the Commission shall take into account the
5 potential impact on, and cost-shifting to, other utility customers. Any cost-
6 shifting to ineligible utility customers to offset the cost of a discount program
7 under this section shall be a voluntary fee and at the discretion of the utility
8 customer. When an offset fee is shown on a customer’s bill, notice as to how
9 to obtain information about the discount program approved under this section
10 and how a customer may withdraw from the voluntary fee shall be provided in
11 a clear and discernible manner. This notice shall include, at a minimum, a toll-
12 free telephone number and, to the extent feasible, shall be on the customer’s
13 bill and near the offset fee charge.

14 Sec. 4. EFFECTIVE DATE

15 This act shall take effect on July 1, 2019.