

1 H.581

2 Introduced by Representative Pugh of South Burlington

3 Referred to Committee on

4 Date:

5 Subject: Human services; home heating fuel assistance; payment to fuel  
6 suppliers

7 Statement of purpose: This bill proposes to allow regulated gas and electric  
8 utilities to credit payments from the home heating fuel assistance program to  
9 customer accounts and to manage the flow of information with the agency of  
10 human services according to current practice, rather than by the payment after  
11 delivery provision now required for unregulated fuel suppliers.

12 An act relating to reporting requirements of fuel suppliers under the home  
13 heating assistance program

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

15 Sec. 1. 33 V.S.A. § 2607 is amended to read:

16 § 2607. PAYMENTS TO FUEL SUPPLIERS

17 (a) The secretary of human services or designee shall certify fuel suppliers,  
18 excluding firewood and wood pellet suppliers, to be eligible to participate in  
19 the home heating fuel assistance program. Beneficiaries may use their  
20 seasonal fuel assistance benefit to obtain home heating fuel or energy only

1 from a fuel supplier certified by the director, except that beneficiaries who heat  
2 with firewood or wood pellets may obtain their firewood or wood pellets from  
3 any supplier they choose.

4 (b) Certified fuel suppliers shall agree to conduct reasonable efforts in  
5 order to inform and assist beneficiaries in their service areas, maintain records  
6 of amounts and costs of all fuel deliveries, send periodic statements to  
7 customers receiving home heating fuel assistance informing them of their  
8 account's credit or debit balance as of the last statement, deliveries or usage  
9 since that statement and the charges for such, payments made or applied,  
10 indicating their source, since that statement, and the ending credit or debit  
11 balance. Certified fuel suppliers shall also agree to provide the secretary of  
12 human services or designee such information deemed necessary for the  
13 efficient administration of the program, including, for unregulated and  
14 nonmetered certified fuel suppliers, information required to pay the  
15 beneficiary's benefits to the certified supplier after fuel is delivered ~~or, for~~  
16 ~~metered fuel and regulated utilities, after the beneficiary's account has been~~  
17 ~~billed.~~

18 (c) Certified fuel suppliers shall not disclose the beneficiary status of  
19 recipients of home heating fuel assistance benefits, the names of recipients, or  
20 other information pertaining to recipients to anyone, except for purposes

1 directly connected with administration of the home heating fuel assistance  
2 program or when required by law.

3 (d) Certified fuel suppliers shall also agree to enter into budget agreements  
4 with beneficiaries for annualized monthly payments for fuel supplies provided  
5 the beneficiary meets accepted industry credit standards, and shall grant  
6 program beneficiaries such cash discounts, preseason delivery savings,  
7 automatic fuel delivery agreements, and any other discounts granted to any  
8 other heating fuel customer or as the secretary of human services or designee  
9 may negotiate with certified fuel suppliers.

10 (e) The secretary of human services or designee shall provide each certified  
11 fuel supplier with a list of the households who are its customers and have been  
12 found eligible for annual home heating fuel assistance for the current year, the  
13 total amount of annual home heating fuel assistance that has been authorized  
14 for each household, and how the total amount has been allocated over the  
15 heating season. Each authorized amount shall function as a line of credit for  
16 each eligible household. The secretary or designee shall disburse authorized  
17 home heating fuel assistance benefits to certified fuel suppliers on behalf of  
18 eligible households after fuel is delivered or, for metered fuel and regulated  
19 utilities, ~~after the beneficiary's account has been billed~~ in accordance with an  
20 allocation schedule.

1           (f) The secretary of human services or designee shall negotiate with one or  
2 more certified fuel suppliers to obtain the most advantageous pricing and,  
3 payment terms, and delivery methods possible for eligible households.

4           Sec. 2. EFFECTIVE DATE

5           This act shall take effect on July 1, 2012.