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H.613

Introduced by Representatives Condon of Colchester, Bouchard of Colchester,  
Canfield of Fair Haven, Cupoli of Rutland City, Gage of  
Rutland City, Myers of Essex, Shaw of Pittsford, and Winters  
of Williamstown

Referred to Committee on

Date:

Subject: Utilities; electric; natural gas; energy assistance programs; ratepayer  
funding

Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to prohibit the  
Public Service Board from establishing a low-income energy assistance  
program funded by ineligible ratepayers on a mandatory basis. Rather, it  
makes residential ratepayer funding of such a program voluntary.

An act relating to energy assistance program fees

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

\* \* \* Electric Energy Assistance Program \* \* \*

Sec. 1. 30 V.S.A. § 218(e) is amended to read:

(e) Notwithstanding any other provisions of this section, the Board, on its  
own motion or upon petition of any person, may issue an order approving a  
rate schedule, tariff, agreement, contract, or settlement that provides reduced

1 rates for ~~low income~~ low-income electric utility consumers better to assure  
2 affordability. ~~For the purposes of~~ As used in this subsection, “~~low income~~  
3 low-income electric utility consumer” means a customer who has a household  
4 income at or below 150 percent of the current federal poverty level. When  
5 considering whether to approve a rate schedule, tariff, agreement, contract, or  
6 settlement for ~~low income~~ low-income electric utility consumers, the Board  
7 shall take into account the potential impact on, and cost-shifting to, other  
8 utility customers. The Board’s order shall ensure that ineligible, residential  
9 utility customers are not required to fund any program authorized under this  
10 subsection. Residential ratepayer funding shall be voluntary only.

11 \* \* \* Natural Gas Energy Assistance Program \* \* \*

12 Sec. 2. 33 V.S.A. § 2607(g) is amended to read:

13 (g)(1) The Public Service Board shall require natural gas suppliers subject  
14 to regulation under 30 V.S.A § 203 to provide a discount program to customers  
15 with incomes no greater than 200 percent of the federal poverty level or who  
16 meet the Department for Children and Families’ means test of eligibility for  
17 LIHEAP crisis fuel assistance. Eligibility for the discount shall be verified by  
18 the Department for Children and Families.

19 (2) In implementing the discount program, the Board shall consider:

20 (A) ~~Low income~~ low-income discount programs, rates, and cost  
21 structures of other Vermont regulated utilities;

1 (B) ~~Low income~~ low-income discount programs, rates, and cost  
2 structures for gas customers in other states;

3 (C) ~~Options~~ options for allocating the costs of the discount program  
4 that avoid or reduce the cost impact of the program on ineligible ratepayers,  
5 including consideration of each of the following:

6 (i) ~~Use~~ use of any revenues collected from ratepayers that are in  
7 excess of the revenue requirement most recently determined by the Board;

8 (ii) ~~Use~~ use of revenues collected from ratepayers to fund system  
9 expansions that have not been placed in service.

10 (3) The Board shall not require ineligible, residential ratepayers to fund  
11 the discount program authorized under this subsection. Residential ratepayer  
12 funding shall be voluntary only.

13 (4) On or before January 15, 2013, the Board shall:

14 (A) implement this subsection by order to each natural gas company  
15 subject to its jurisdiction; and

16 (B) report to the House Committees on Commerce and Economic  
17 Development and on Human Services, and to the Senate Committees on Health  
18 and Welfare and on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs on  
19 its implementation of this subsection, including its consideration of the matters  
20 described in subdivision (2) of this subsection and the results of that  
21 consideration.

