PUC FORMALIZES ELECTRICITY RELIEF PROGRAM EXTENSION
Deferred Payment Plan mandate also extended to August 31, 2020

Austin, TX – In today's open meeting of the Public Utility Commission of Texas, commissioners voted to extend the state's Electricity Relief Program to August 31, 2020. Citing the governor's July 10, 2020 decision to extend the COVID-19 disaster declaration for all Texas counties, the orders extend the protection from disconnections for non-payment for ERP participants, continues the requirement for Retail Electric Providers to offer deferred payment plans when requested, and sets August 31, 2020 as the last day for enrollment in the ERP.

 "This pandemic is far from over, so we will continue to monitor its impact on Texas utility customers as we follow the governor's lead on assisting the Texans who need it most," said Chairman DeAnn Walker. "Our goal is to ensure our state emerges from these troubled times with our competitive electricity marketplace intact and its benefits positively affecting customers across the state."

The approved orders also laid out guidelines for the continued collection of the $0.33/megawatt hour rider charge by transmission distribution utilities (TDUs), requiring them to notify the PUC with a tariff rate cancellation seven days prior to the collection of revenues equal to their ERP expenses. All TDUs will be required to file a comprehensive final program report by December 1, 2020.

"Regulatory certainty is a hallmark of the Texas model and we're doing our best to keep everyone in the equation informed as to our intentions," said Commissioner Arthur D'Andrea. "The entities under our purview have worked hard to respond to our guidance and I expect they'll continue to do so for the duration of the ERP."

The orders also clarified the steps for booking regulatory assets to offset any over- or under-collection of funds by program's end, to be resolved in future rate cases. In addition, the orders addressed administrative housekeeping issues, including the end of the filing deadline suspension thanks to the successful, widespread adoption of electronic filing.

Initially created by commission order on March 26, 2020, the ERP is intended to help unemployed customers of Retail Electric Providers by providing protection from disconnections for non-payment and offering bill payment assistance using funds from a rider charge applied to the bills of electricity customers across ERCOT.

Counting Texans in the program due to their inclusion on the state's low-income list (due to participation in SNAP or MEDICAID), the ERP program is currently protecting more than 590,000 households from disconnection for non-payment.

"I'm proud that this commission has adapted to emerging challenges while remaining sensitive to consumer concerns," said Commissioner Shelly Botkin. "I appreciate everyone working together to find solutions."

For more information about the PUC's response to the coronavirus pandemic, Texans are encouraged to visit the agency's resource page at http://www.puc.texas.gov/covid-19/. Texas electricity customers in the areas of the state open to retail competition who have filed or will file for unemployment with the Texas Workforce Commission can request enrollment in the program at http://TXCOVID19ERP.org or call 866-454-8387 until August 31, 2020.

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About the Public Utility Commission

Our mission is to serve Texans by regulating the state's electric, telecommunication, and water and sewer utilities, implementing respective legislation, and offering customer assistance in resolving consumer complaints. Since its founding in 1975, the Commission has a long and proud history of service to Texas, protecting customers, fostering competition, and promoting high quality infrastructure. To learn more, please visit http://www.puc.texas.gov.