



Public Utility Commission of Texas

1701 N. Congress, P.O. Box 13326, Austin, TX 78711-3326 Fax 512-936-7003

News Release
July 2, 2020

Contact: Andrew Barlow
Andrew.Barlow@PUC.Texas.GOV

PUC AGREES TO EXTEND ELECTRICITY RELIEF PROGRAM

July 17 expiration date pushed to August 31, 2020

Austin, TX – In today’s open meeting of the Public Utility Commission of Texas, commissioners agreed in principle to extend the state’s Electricity Relief Program past its current July 17th deadline to August 31, 2020. Citing the governor’s decision to curtail certain economic activities in the face of rising coronavirus diagnoses and COVID-19 hospitalizations, the commission authorized staff to draft an extension order for review and approval in the next open meeting.

“This pandemic has presented Texas with a dynamic set of challenges that require us to be flexible and nimble in our approach,” said Chairman DeAnn Walker. “While we certainly wish we could snap our fingers and make this virus go away, it’s clearly with us for the long haul and we need to reflect that in our decisions.”

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.

“It’s clear that the transaction costs of moving the dates are fairly low, so we can and should remain flexible on the duration of the program,” said Commissioner Arthur D’Andrea. “Since the government is essentially ordering people not to work for the time being, it makes sense to extend the ERP.”

To date, more than 106,000 Texans have enrolled in the program either online or by phone. 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 560,000 households from disconnection for non-payment.

“It’s instructive to note that the Texas Workforce Commission is taking a similarly flexible approach as the situation continues,” said Commissioner Shelly Botkin. “In our shared commitment to assisting unemployed Texans during this season of uncertainty, a deadline extension makes good sense.”



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 are encouraged to request enrollment in the program at <http://TXCOVID19ERP.org> or call 866-454-8387.

###

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>.