HLS 20RS-1207 ORIGINAL

2020 Regular Session

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HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 22

BY REPRESENTATIVE JAMES

PUBLIC SERVICE COMN: Urges and requests the Public Service Commission to temporarily prohibit energy and water companies from disconnecting services

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

2	To urge and request the Public Service Commission to prohibit energy and water companies
3	from disconnecting services for a period of three months.
4	WHEREAS, a novel coronavirus named "coronavirus disease 2019", commonly
5	referred to as COVID-19, was first detected in Wuhan City, Hubei Province China, in
6	December of 2019; and
7	WHEREAS, the coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that are common in
8	people and many different animal species; and
9	WHEREAS, COVID-19 is a respiratory illness that has a broad range of symptoms
10	from mild, flu-like symptoms to severe breathing difficulties that result in death; and
11	WHEREAS, the first confirmed instance of person-to-person spread of the virus in
12	the United States was recorded on January 30, 2020; and
13	WHEREAS, on the same day the World Health Organization declared the outbreak
14	"a public health emergency of international concern"; and
15	WHEREAS, the rapid spread of COVID-19 lead the World Health Organization to
16	upgrade its declaration to a "global pandemic" on March 11, 2020; and
17	WHEREAS, the first presumptive positive case of COVID-19 in Louisiana occurred
18	on March 9, 2020; and
19	WHEREAS, the Governor of Louisiana declared a statewide public health emergency
20	on March 11, 2020, due to the risks related to public health associated with the COVID-19
21	Coronavirus; and

1	WHEREAS, presently there is no vaccine to protect against COVID-19, there is a
2	high probability of widespread exposure, and the disease poses an imminent threat to
3	Louisiana citizens; and
4	WHEREAS, according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), "older adults and
5	those with severe underlying chronic medical conditions such as heart disease, lung disease,
6	or diabetes seem to be at a higher risk for developing more serious complications from the
7	COVID-19 illness"; and
8	WHEREAS, the CDC recommends people wash their hands often with soap and
9	water for at least twenty seconds, especially after they have been in a public place, or after
10	blowing their nose, coughing, or sneezing and also recommends the use of detergent to keep
11	items clean; and
12	WHEREAS, on March 13, 2020, President Donald J. Trump declared a national
13	emergency over the COVID-19 Coronavirus outbreak; and
14	WHEREAS, as of March 16, 2020, Louisiana reports 114 COVID-19 cases and two
15	deaths from the virus; and
16	WHEREAS, the Public Service Commission is charged with ensuring a regulatory
17	balance that enables utilities to provide customers with safe, adequate, and reliable services,
18	at rates that are just, reasonable, equitable, and economically efficient; and
19	WHEREAS, the Public Service Commission has jurisdiction over publicly owned
20	utilities providing electric, water, waste water, natural gas, and telecommunications services;
21	and
22	WHEREAS, in the interest of protecting public health, the Public Service
23	Commission should temporarily suspend disconnection of electric or gas service to
24	residential customers for nonpayment; and
25	WHEREAS, the impact of the coronavirus in the state could cause economic
26	suffering for many, specifically those who become sick or are forced to miss work, which
27	also may ultimately result in job loss; and
28	WHEREAS, utility companies in New York agreed to a no-disconnect policy at the
29	request of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Department of Public Service;
30	and

1	WHEREAS, major private water companies in New York also agreed to suspend
2	shut-offs during the pandemic; and
3	WHEREAS, on March 13, 2020, the West Virginia Public Service Commission
4	urged all public utility companies in the state to suspend service terminations effective
5	immediately, with exceptions for safety and customer requests; and
6	WHEREAS, in the past, when Louisiana has experienced severe temperatures during
7	both the winter summer months, electric and gas companies suspended service terminations
8	for nonpayment in the interest of public safety and health; and
9	WHEREAS, similar actions were taken after Hurricane Katrina impacted Louisiana;
10	and
11	WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic has already created financial burdens for
12	many residents of Louisiana and those burdens may continue increasing for the
13	disadvantaged; and
14	WHEREAS, suspending utility disconnections and decreasing the financial impact
15	that residents may face will alleviate much of the inevitable financial stress that will result
16	from the COVID-19 Coronavirus; and
17	WHEREAS, in the interest of public safety and preventing the spread of COVID-19
18	and given the severity of the COVID-19 Coronavirus and the uncertainty surrounding the
19	impact it may have on Louisiana residents, the Public Service Commission should prohibit
20	the suspension of utility services to ensure that those enduring financial strain and those
21	members of disadvantaged communities will not have concerns about keeping critical utility
22	services connected.
23	THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby
24	urge and request the Public Service Commission to prohibit energy and water companies
25	from disconnecting utility services for a period of three months.
26	BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the
27	secretary of the Public Service Commission.

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DIGEST

The digest printed below was prepared by House Legislative Services. It constitutes no part of the legislative instrument. The keyword, one-liner, abstract, and digest do not constitute part of the law or proof or indicia of legislative intent. [R.S. 1:13(B) and 24:177(E)]

HCR 22 Original

2020 Regular Session

James

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